SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 354. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 12TH, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

A WONDERFUL MEDICINE!

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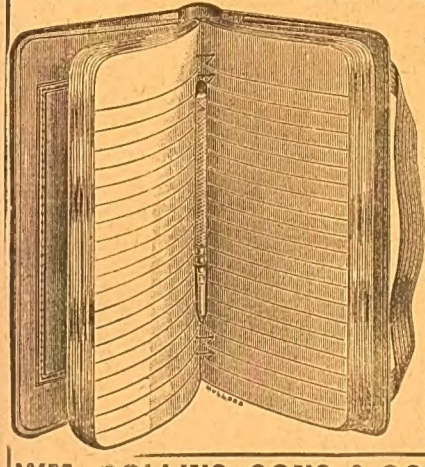

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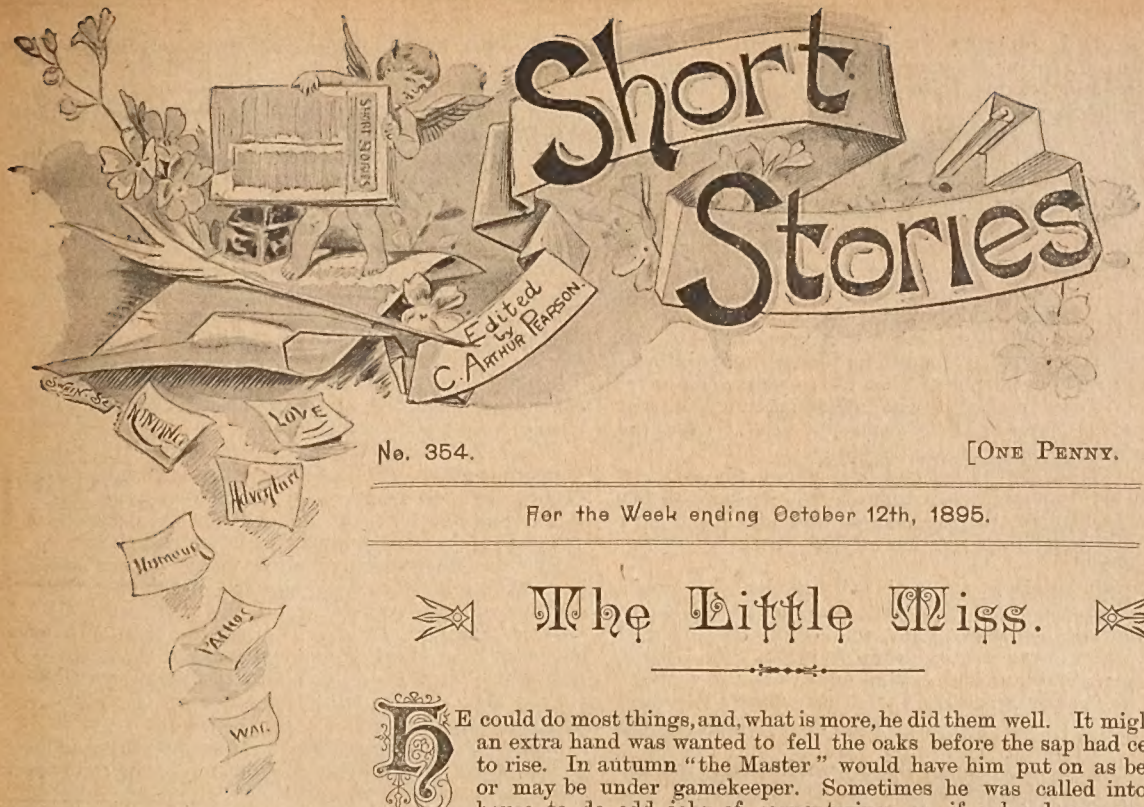

No. 354. [One Penny.

For the Week ending October 12th, 1895.

The Little Miss.

HE could do most things, and, what is more, he did them well. It might be an extra hand was wanted to fell the oaks before the sap had ceased to rise. In autumn "the Master" would have him put on as beater, or may be under gamekeeper. Sometimes he was called into the house to do odd jobs of carpentering; or, if a hand were wanted in the stable, it was Gilroy who filled the vacancy.

Possibly it was his militia training that made him even wheel a barrow differently from the other men; anyway, he had always been a favourite with "the Master," and when "the little Miss" came to live at the house it seemed only natural that Gilroy should be deputed to teach her to ride, and fire straight, to throw a fly, and manage a boat.

"If she ain't a boy, she shall have the same chances," the old man would say, "and," he would add, "she will make none the worse woman for that."

Seated on his cob, he watched her learn to ride and jump in the ten-acre meadow; or listened from the bank to the even voice of Gilroy reiterating: "Wrists back, keep the elbows in, lean well back," as he taught her to scull on the lake.

It was Gilroy who taught her the names of flies and the mysterious lore of fishing, how to tell a bird by its flight, and showed her where to find their nests. It was to Gilroy she confided her distaste for lessons, and her distaste at the arrangement of Providence in having destined her to be a girl. And Gilroy, by teaching her to do what boys do, reconciled her to her adverse fate.

And so in time she learnt to ride "the Master's" bay, to wield the heavy salmon rod, to throw a fly, and sail a boat, and shoot a pheasant on the wing. And then "the Master" realised that she must learn to be a woman, and "the little Miss" was sent to school abroad. And Gilroy was told to look to it that "the little Missie's" gun and fishing tackle were kept in order against her coming home.

* * * * * * *

And things went on about the same as usual. In regular succession the flowers replaced each other in the trim kept beds, whilst in the orchard ripe apples thudded unnoticed to the ground. In autumn "the Master" shot the coverts, and rode to hounds in winter, and when Lent came round looked up his book of flies.

* * * * * * *

It was three years later, when the trees were all in blossom, that "the little Miss" came home.

Gilroy was busy in the garden potting out. He saw her walk across the lawn the same as ever, by "the Master's" side, just as she'd used to, except that now "the Master's" hand rested on her arm, instead of holding her hand in his.

She came straight up to Gilroy where he worked, and spoke to him "as nice as anythink." She was still "the little Miss"—yet different, being now "a woman grown." Gilroy straightened himself and touched his hat, and said "as he was glad to see her back," and hoped "as she was well." In rapid questions she asked after her pets—the boat, her rods, and gun—and laughingly said she must be very out of practice, and that Gilroy would have to teach her all again, and smiling she passed on down the path.

"Grandad," she said, "he is splendid, like a young Greek God who has been condemned to leave Olympus in order that he may learn to till the earth. I should like to paint him, to try and get that rich warm tone

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of wind and sun-tanned flesh, the outline of those muscles, and the whole expression of manly courage in his face and bearing. Do you think he would sit for me?" she asked.

The old man patted the girl's arm, and thought perhaps young Gilroy might be persuaded to take the part of model if she asked him to.

And so it came about that Gilroy, somewhat loth, posed daily for "the little Miss." The while she roughly sketched him in, she talked of places she had seen, of paintings, and of lovely music she had heard. Just as in days gone by she had told him, in the same bright way, of fairies, gnomes, and dwarfs.

And as she talked of this or that great man—of one who rose from shepherd boy to be the leading painter of his age; and how one spoilt his art to please his wife; and of a deaf musician who made such music that it would not cease to echo down the ages—he felt the distance widening that lay between him and his "little Miss." When he pulled the boat about the lake, or helped her bait her hook, or land a fish, he did it as her servant, and almost wished she would not thank him in the voice, whose very tone and accent raised her so far above him.

At his work in summer, in the garden, he would watch her talking to the guests who visited the house. He could see her ready smile, and catch the pleasant laugh as she passed from group to group. And, later, when the carriages had driven off, she would saunter round the garden with Mr. Launcelot—maybe he would take her on the lake, or just sit quietly on the terrace.

On such days as these, Gilroy would listen for the striking of the stable clock that set him free, and wonder that the heat had made him feel so tired.

They would take him with them in the boat when they went fishing, and, as he slowly rowed them on the lake, sunk deep between the hills where only sheep-bells broke the silence, and where the passing clouds made purple shadows on hills and lake—he would listen to their easy talk of men, and things, and books, and he would wonder at the way in which they turned each other's sayings into fun, and lightly laughed the time away. So different were they from himself, they seemed creatures of another world.

From time to time they would speak to him; Mr. Launcelot would tell him of rivers he had fished in Norway or in Canada; or perhaps it might be some piece of news out of the daily papers. And sometimes when "Miss Enid" had not been so lucky, she would take the oars in order that Gilroy off her rod might make up the deficiency. And when they landed Gilroy would stay behind to see to the boat, the fish, and tackle. He would stand and watch them out of sight, Miss Enid's slight little figure beside the man's, and would dimly wonder at the distance that divided him from them.

* * * * * *

The First was to "the Master" still a great event, and shooting superseded fishing.

Once more, in short cloth skirt and gaiters, with her gun, "Miss Enid" seemed "the little Miss" of long ago. "The Master" liked to have her with him, and with a buoyant ease she tramped across the fields and meadows, heedless of heavy dews and straggling blackberry trails.

The woods were scarcely touched with autumn, only stillness and the robin's song suggested closing summer. The drives in the hazel coppice were still crudely green, the underwood grew thickly, and in damp places toad-stools gleamed redly amongst newly-fallen leaves.

"The Master," towards the close of September, suggested they should shoot the coppice, taking stray shots at any game that was disturbed.

Gilroy, to whom the order was given, thought it dangerous sport. He had in his time known more than one accident occur precisely in that very hazel coppice, but it was not his place to question the decision, and guns and dogs were ready at the appointed time.

The day went well, and already the sun was getting low, making it difficult, amongst the lights and shadows of the coppice, to correctly mark the game, when Gilroy noticed a partridge rise and cross the drive. He saw a gleaming barrel raised, and realised that Mr. Launcelot, not seeing Miss Enid hidden by the undergrowth, was taking aim, whilst she, unconscious of the gun, was looking at the bird.

There was no time to speak. He was not near enough to knock the gun aside. A shout might be misunderstood. There was but one thing to be done—to step into the drive and intercept the charge. He did not stop to calculate the nearness of the gun, nor reckon that the bird was flying fairly high. He only knew "Miss Enid" was in danger. That was enough.

The firing of the charge was followed by the startled flight of birds and fluttering to the earth of yellow leaves, and then a stillness.

"Oh, Launcelot! have you missed?"

Her voice rung clearly in the autumn air as, with an eager look, she stepped into the sunlight.

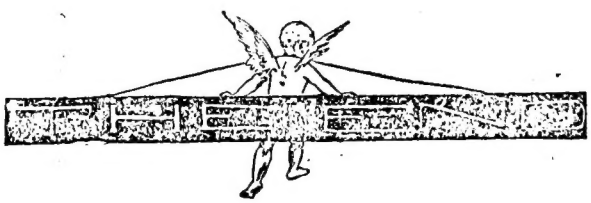
The smoke had lifted, and at her feet, lying across the drive, was Gilroy—dead.

* * * * *

It was in the winter they were married. The church-yard path was swept and carpeted, whilst on either side the snow lay thick, obliterating in one glistening whiteness all unevenness in mounds and levelled graves.

Inside the church the waiting guests grew silent, as on a brass they read engraved the story tersely told of how a man laid down his life to save a friend.

Edith Escombe.



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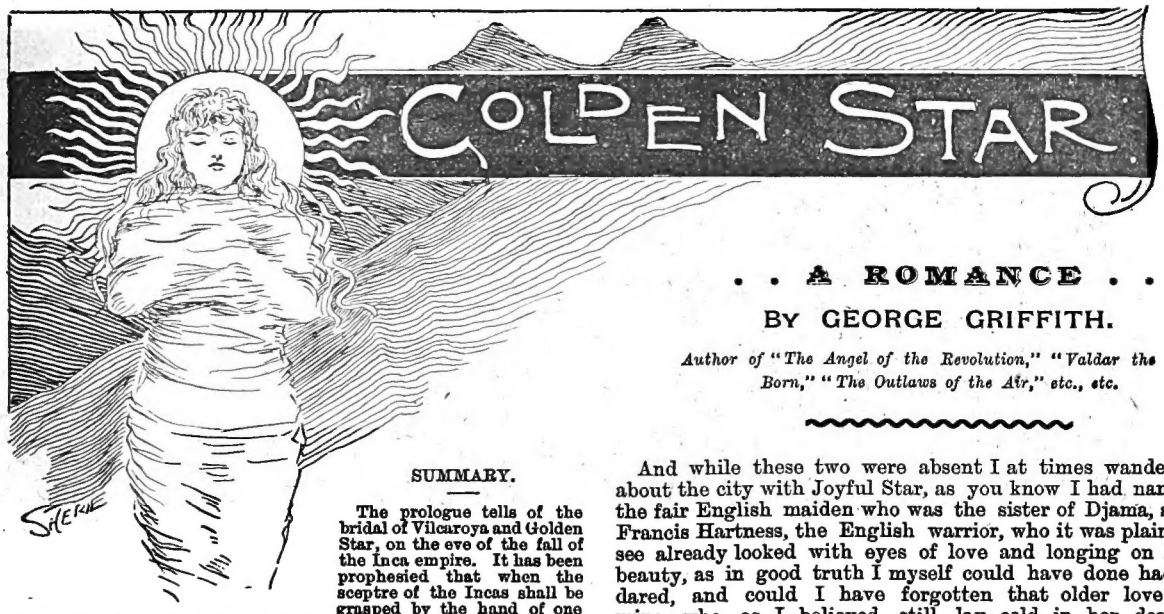


. . A ROMANCE . .

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

The prologue tells of the bridal of Vilcaroya and Golden Star, on the eve of the fall of the Inca empire. It has been prophesied that when the sceptre of the Incas shall be grasped by the hand of one who has been dead, and is alive again, the ancient glories of their empire shall be restored, and they dare the ordeal together. Three hundred years later Professor Martin Lamson brings to England a mummy from Peru. Laurens Djama undertakes to restore it to animation. The mummy is removed to Djama's laboratory, and in a week he shows the Professor his mummy alive. The Professor learns that he is the Vilcaroya of the legend. He asks for Golden Star, and they tell him that she has been dead for over three hundred years. He promises them that if they will restore her, too, to life he will give them untold treasures. He rapidly regains health and strength, and in six months the party embark for Peru. They meet in Panama a friend of Professor Lamson, Captain Hartness, who joins their party. On the way Hartness is told the whole story, and throws in his lot with the Inca. With Book II. begins Vilcaroya's personal narrative of his return to his own country and the events which resulted from it.

CHAPTER IX.

Brothers of the Blood.

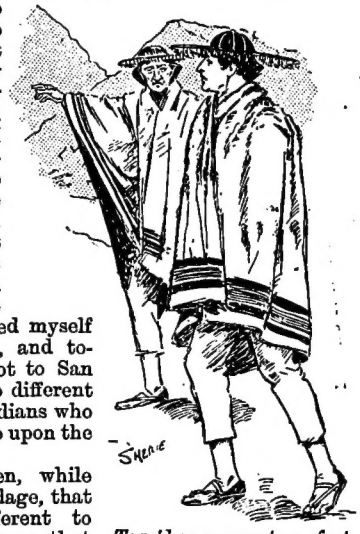
I shall not weary you who perchance may some day read this story of mine by dwelling on the sorrow and shame that filled me as I entered the foul, unlovely streets, and saw the filthy refuse in the squares of the city that I remembered so pure and bright and beautiful; nor yet of the feelings that possessed me when I saw the poor remains of our desecrated temples, the places where our vanished palaces had stood, and the dismantled ruins of that mighty fortress of Sacsahuaman, which I had last seen standing palace-crowned and throned in all its grandeur high up above the city.

All this and more you who read must picture for yourselves, for I have greater things to tell of than the poor sorrows of a wanderer who had left his own age and his own kindred far behind him, and who had come back into a strange world to find his country a wilderness and the children of his people the slaves of strangers.

It had been settled amongst us that for the purpose for which we had come it would be necessary to hire a house that should be at once commodious for our work, sufficiently removed from the city for privacy, and capable of defence against intruders if need be. The Professor, being already known in Cuzco as a man of science and seeker after antiquities, and possessing, moreover, a special permit from the Government in Lima to travel and dwell in the interior and make such searches as he thought fit, undertook the business of finding such a house. He made many journeys in quest of what he sought, and on these journeys Djama always accompanied him, since he had to see that the house chosen contained a chamber suitable for that precious work that he had undertaken to do in return for the share of treasure that I was to give him.

And while these two were absent I at times wandered about the city with Joyful Star, as you know I had named the fair English maiden who was the sister of Djama, and Francis Hartness, the English warrior, who it was plain to see already looked with eyes of love and longing on her beauty, as in good truth I myself could have done had I dared, and could I have forgotten that older love of mine, who, as I believed, still lay cold in her death-sleep in the cave by the lake yonder over the mountains to the westward, whither I had already cast so many longing glances. But at other times I left them to go upon my own ways, for I had work of my own on hand which, for the present, did not concern them.

I had by this time met and conversed with many of my people in their own language, which was that of the labouring classes of my own times, and from them I had learned that at a village called San Sebastian, through which we had passed, about two leagues to the south of the city, there still dwelt many families of Ayllos—that is to say, the descendants of those of the old noble Inca lineage, who had been permitted by their conquerors to settle here. So one morning I went to visit an old Indian—as they now called all our people — named Ullullo, with whom I had made acquaintance, and at his house I dressed myself in the native fashion, in an old shirt and short trousers, with sandals on my feet, and a broad brimmed fringed hat on my head, and covered myself with a faded poncho, and together we went on foot to San Sebastian, I looking no different from the rest of the Indians who were passing to and fro upon the road.



Together we went on foot to San Sebastian.

I had already seen, while riding through the village, that the people were different to those of all other villages that we had come through on the way. They were taller in stature, prouder in carriage, and fairer of face. The blood showed red in their cheeks through the light brown of their skin, and these signs had told me that if any remnant of the pure Inca race was left these must be they, and I was soon to have proof that it was so, although the chil-

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dren of those who had lived in palaces were now dwelling in huts of mud and reeds.

Ullullo led me first to the house of a man named Tupac-Rayca, who was chief among the Indians of the town. He was great grandson of that ill-fated Tupac-Amaru, who, as you know, had revolted many years before against the oppressors of his race, and for this, after being forced to watch the brutal murder of his wife in the square of Cuzco, had himself been torn to pieces by horses.

He staggered back.

We found him alone in a bare room in one of the better houses of the village. As he stood up to salute us it needed but a glance to tell me that in his veins at least the ancient blood of our race flowed well-nigh as purely as it did in my own. Had it not been for the meanness of his clothing and the dull brooding look on his noble features—the stamp of generations of oppression—I could have pictured him with the yellow Llautu* on his brow, the golden image of the Sun on his girdled tunic, and the rainbow banner in his hand, standing amongst the guards of the great Huayni-Capac himself.

I asked Ullullo to leave us alone for a little while, and when he had gone I stepped forward and, drawing myself up to my full height, I looked him in the eyes, and said in the tongue that was spoken only by those of the divine Inca race:

"Tell me, Tupac-Rayca, does a remnant of the Children of the Sun still dwell in the Land of the Four Regions, and are they still faithful to the traditions of their race, and the faith of their ancestors?"

As the words left my lips he staggered back a pace or two with his hands to his forehead, staring at me from under them as though—as in very truth it was—some spirit of the past stood re-embodied before him. Then, coming forward again and scanning me eagerly from head to foot, he whispered in the same tongue—by the Lord of Light how those familiar accents thrilled my ears as I heard them after so long!

"Who are you, a stranger, that comes in the image of those long dead, to ask me such a question in the tongue that may only be spoken when none save those of the Blood are present?"

"One who is of the Blood himself," I answered, taking a stride towards him, and stretching out my hand. "Fear not, Tupac-Rayca, son of him that suffered, I am a friend, and have come from afar to work as a friend with you and others of the Blood that may still be left in the land, with a great and holy purpose, of which you shall know ere long."

He grasped my hand and bowed over it in silence for a while. Then he stepped back and looked at me again, murmuring:

"Can it be so? Has the divine Manco come back from the Mansions of the Sun to save the remnant of his children, or has Vilcaroya broken the bonds of his death-sleep and come to fulfil the oath he swore with Golden Star before the altar in the sanctuary? I know all the Children of the Blood that are left in the land, and I have never seen your face before, yet you *are* of the Blood. Who are you—Lord?"

The last word seemed forced from his lips by some power other than his own will, and it sounded most pleasant to me, for it told me that, without knowing my name, and seeing me only as a stranger, he had recognised the stamp of my divine ancestry, and this promised well for the progress of the work I had in hand. I answered him kindly, and yet as one speaking to another who is scarce his equal, and said:

"My name matters not now or here, Tupac, for we are but two, and I might lie to you, and you would have no proof of my truth or falsehood. But if you will do as I bid you, to-night you shall know and all shall be made plain and with ample proof. Are you willing to give me your aid?"

He picked up a rude hoe that stood in a corner of the room, and, laying it across his shoulders after the manner of one who bears a burden, bowed his head and answered:

"The Son of the Sun has but to speak, and I and all his slaves will obey."

What he had done was an act of homage, which, in the olden time, was paid only to him who wore the imperial Llautu, and proved to me how faithfully the old traditions had been preserved in secret.

"That is well said, Tupac," I replied, speaking now as a Sovereign might speak to a faithful subject, "and in the days to come fear not that I shall forget this your first act of unasked-for homage. Now, hear me. Are there twenty men of the Blood in this village, men who are faithful and can be trusted even to the death?"

"There are five hundred here, Lord, and as many thousands within the valley, whose blood has flowed pure from the olden times, unpolluted by a single stain of Spanish dirt. What would you with them?"

"I asked not for hundreds or thousands," I said, right glad at heart to hear such good tidings. "For the present I need but a score, so do you chose me twenty of the noblest blood and the best judgment, and an hour before midnight let them be with you on the plain behind the Sacsahuaman. Let them come well provided with torches or candles, and tools, levers, and hammers and spades. Tell them what has passed between us, but nothing of the guesses that you may have made in your own mind when we have been talking, and leave the rest to me. Can you do that?"

He picked up a rude hoe.

"It shall be done, Lord," he answered, still bending before me with the shaft of the hoe across his shoulders, "and we will wait and toil in patience till the Son of the Sun shall please to reveal himself to the eyes of his servants."

"Nor shall you have to wait long," I said. "Now put that off your back and take my hand again, for we are not Inca and servant yet, only two men of the Blood, and brothers of a fallen race who are joined together to perform a holy work. Now farewell, Tupac, till to-night. Choose

* The yellow Llautu, or fringed turban of wool, worn on the brows, was the distinguishing mark of the sacred Inca race. The scarlet was worn only by the reigning Inca—"Son of the Sun." Its fringe, called the "borla," was mingled with threads of gold.

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your companions well, and fear not but that your services and your faithfulness shall have their due reward."

He put his hand humbly and tremblingly into mine, bowing low over it, and so I left him, standing there with bent head, not daring to look up until the door closed behind me. Then Ullullo and I went back into the city, and as we crossed the great square on our way to Ullullo's house I saw my four English friends standing among the market people by the fountain in the centre. We passed close to them, and I heard my name spoken by Joyful Star to her brother, who answered her and said:

I saw my four English friends.

"I dare say we shall find he is making friends again with some of these filthy Indian compatriots of his."

I hated him from that moment for his bitter words, and swore in my heart that some day he should pay for them, for I loved my people, and pitied them in their misery and degradation. I stopped beside them, and my heart was beating hard as I listened for what Joyful Star would say, and I have remembered her words, even as I have remembered his. She looked at him with the light of anger in her eyes, and said:

"For shame, Laurens! I couldn't have believed that you would have said such a thing. If you belonged to a race that had been enslaved and plundered by these brutes of Spaniards and Peruvians for three centuries and a half, do you think you would be any better than these poor fellows? And, besides, whatever they are, they are Vilcaroya's people, and he is our friend."

I could have fallen on the stones and kissed her feet for those sweet words of hers, and I moved away quickly for fear I should betray myself, and went with a swelling heart and mingled tears of love and anger in my eyes to old Ullullo's house, where I changed my clothes again, and then, as it was nearly dinner time, which, as you know, is in the evening in Spanish countries, I went back to the house where we were lodging, wondering what they would think if they could have understood the words that had passed between Tupac-Rayca and myself.

CHAPTER X.

Wife or Sister?

When I met my friends and the man who, as the warning voice in my heart already told me, would one day be my enemy, I saw that they would willingly have learned what had become of me during the day, but I answered their inquiries by telling them nothing more and yet a great deal less than the truth, and saying that I had spent the day revisiting old scenes, and learning what I could of the present condition of my people. This satisfied them outwardly at least, though I saw a look in Djama's eyes which told me that he suspected more of the truth than it suited my purpose to tell him.

Then our conversation turned to the matter of procuring a house, such as I have spoken of, and the Professor told me that he had heard of a hacienda, well built and solid, and standing in its own domain, about three leagues across the valley to the westward, on a secluded little plain among the hills, which would serve our purpose excellently; but the owner of it wished to sell it, and "with the stupidity of these Peruvians," as he said, would not hire it out to us but would only sell it, and the price was twenty thousand soles, or dollars of Peru, which was two thousand pounds in English money.

"It is a great pity," said the Professor, when he had finished telling me about it, "for it doesn't seem as though there was another house in the neighbourhood of Cuzco that would suit our purpose, and this one would do perfectly."

"Of course, if the fellow won't let it there's no use thinking any more about the matter, for two thousand pounds is entirely out of the question. It seems to me that the expedition will be quite expensive enough without the luxury of buying houses at fancy prices."

It was Djama who spoke. No one else at our table could have spoken like that. I heard him in silence, for I could not trust myself to speak for the anger that was rising within me. I saw Joyful Star raise her eye-lids and look at him with a swift glance that meant much, but she, too, said nothing, and then, looking at me, he spoke again and said:

"Of course, if his Highness"—for so he always spoke of me when no strangers were present—"would just unlock one of those treasure-houses of his, the matter would be easy enough, but I suppose that's outside the contract."

I still kept silence, knowing as I did what the night was to bring forth. But Francis Hartness answered for me, and said:

"I don't think you can quite put it that way, Djama, if you'll excuse me saying so. If I am not mistaken, it has been clearly understood that the first treasure-house to be unlocked is the one that holds Vilcaroya's greatest treasure, his wife, and what you say seems to suggest——"

"It is enough," I said, unconsciously speaking in my growing anger in the same imperious tone that I had used but a few hours before to Tupac. "Let the house be bought. I will charge myself with the cost, and I will be the debtor of my friends no longer."

They stared at me as I spoke, for hitherto I had spoken to them as a child rather than as a man, as an inferior rather than as an equal. I saw a smile that was not pleasant to look upon pass swiftly over Djama's mouth, but he kept silence, and the Professor said to me:

Rising suddenly from her seat.

"Are you really in earnest, Vilcaroya? You know according to our bargain we have no claim on you until our part of the work is done first. None of us have any desire to learn your secrets."

"I am not talking of secrets," I said, breaking into his speech, "and one of my race does not speak to make a liar of himself. What I say I can do and will, for I wish the work to begin at once. Do you think I have not waited long enough for my beloved, my sister and my wife?"

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"Your what!" cried Joyful Star, rising suddenly from her seat and staring at me with fixed and wide-opened eyes. "Your *sister!* Oh, Vilcaroya, surely that is not true," and as she said this I saw her cheeks grow pale and her lips tremble.

"Yes," I answered, "it is true. Why should I lie to my new sister and friend, Joyful Star? Golden Star was the daughter of my father, the great Huayni-Capac, though our mothers were not the same."

I had no time to finish my speech, for with a look of unutterable horror in her eyes, which pierced me to the heart and seemed to sever it in twain, she cried:

"Oh, no, no; that is too horrible! I can hear no more. I will go back to England to-morrow. Laurens, come to my room, I want to speak to you at once."

So saying she went to the door and opened it and went out, followed by her brother, who looked at me as he passed me with a look which I never forgot or forgave, for it was like the words that I had heard him say to her in the square.

"What is this?" I said to the Professor when the door had closed behind them. "What have I said or done that Joyful Star should look with horror upon me and say such cruel words?"

I saw him exchange glances full of meaning with the English soldier before he answered me; and then, leaning his arms on the table in front of him, he said, in that quiet calm voice of his:

"My dear Vilcaroya, it is a very strange thing, and, as far as Miss Djama is concerned, perhaps, a very great pity that this has never come out before, for without knowing it you have given her a shock that may have very painful consequences. No, don't interrupt me now, for the sooner I can make you understand the meaning of your words to her the better. It is in this way: we know, of course, that in your day and among your people sister-marriage was held to be the most sacred of all marriages. We know that from such a marriage only might spring the wearer of the imperial Borla. No other descent was held to be pure enough for the Son of the Sun; but to us the idea of such a marriage is so unutterably horrible and revolting that of all the crimes that could be committed by one of our race that would be the most fearful. It is a thing that does not even permit itself to be discussed amongst us. It cannot be discussed. It should not even be spoken of, and yet you, in the most perfect innocence, have spoken of it in the presence of—— Good Heavens, Hartness! what is to be done? Do you think Miss Djama was really in earnest when she talked of going back to England to-morrow? It is impossible—it would ruin everything."

Bowing farewell to the others.

I kept silence, for my sorrow and wonder were too great for words, but I listened eagerly for what Francis Hartness would say in reply.

"She was in earnest when she spoke," he said, as quietly as the Professor had spoken; "but if the Doctor has as much sense as I give him credit for, she will have seen the thing in a different light by this time. Of course, she has read Prescott, and she really knows as much about the marriage customs of the ancient Incas as we do. In fact, to tell you the truth"—and as he said this I saw him frown, and an angry light came into his eyes that I had never seen in them before—"I really can hardly understand how, knowing that as she does know it, she can have been as horrified as she certainly was. She knows perfectly well that Vilcaroya has come at a single step, as it were, from his age into ours, and so must have brought all the ideas and beliefs of his time and his people with him. Depend upon it a little reflection will very soon show her that horrible and all as the idea must naturally have appeared to her at the first shock of hearing it, she will see that from Vilcaroya's point of view there is nothing in it but what is perfectly natural and proper. Now, to my mind, the matter is much more sad and serious for Vilcaroya himself than for anyone else."

As he said this he turned from the Professor to me and went on, addressing me in a tone so frank and kindly that ever afterwards I looked upon him as my friend and my brother:

"It's not a pleasant thing for me to say, and it must, of course, be a very painful one for you to hear; still, it's got to be said some time or other, and, unless I am wrong in what I think of you, I believe you are man enough to hear it and to agree with me that it had better be said now than later on, when the saying of it might be tenfold more painful both to you and us."

"Say on," I said shortly. "Your tongue is straight and your eyes look into mine as those of a friend should look. I am listening."

"I would wish for no better friend than you, Vilcaroya, after that, for I know what you mean. Now, what I have to say is this. We know, of course, that you look upon yourself as doubly married to this love of yours, who is dead, and, like you, may yet be alive again. You are bound to her, not only by a marriage which in the time that it took place was perfectly lawful and natural, but also by the oath that you took together. But you have come back to the world in another age and among another people, and now that marriage is, by the common consent of all civilised humanity, not only unlawful, but, as the Professor has just said, unnatural and horrible beyond conception.

"Therefore, if Golden Star is restored to life, for you to love her, save as a brother, or for you to perpetuate the union, which, as you have told us, began and ended before the altar of the Sun, would be to make not only yourself, but your—your sister, Golden Star, as well, looked upon with horror and loathing by every civilised man and woman that knew your story. I am speaking strongly because it is necessary.

"You might succeed in all your aims, you might realise every ambition of your life, and yet I tell you it is Heaven's own truth, that if you took Golden Star to sit beside you on the throne of the Incas as your wife and queen, you would place her upon a pinnacle of infamy that men would spit upon and women turn their backs on. The reward of all your labours, the price of all your treasures, no matter how great they might be, would be nothing but a curse that would fall heavily on you, but a thousand times more heavily on the woman that you have loved best in all the world."

He stopped, and they both sat and looked at me in silence, awaiting for me to answer him. As for me, I felt my spirit wandering over a bare wilderness where all was dark.

I knew that he had spoken truth, strange as the truth seemed to me, for no man could have heard his voice and seen the steady light in his eyes without knowing that he was a true man, and so spoke the truth. The moments passed, and I could still find no words to say. Then the silence was broken by the opening of the door, and Djama came in and said:

"My sister wishes you to excuse her coming back to the table. Of course, I have explained matters to her, and I

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think she now sees them in a different light, but for some reason or other she seems strangely shaken. You know how extremely sensitive she is, and so, as her doctor, as well as her brother, I have sent her to bed. She wasn't really fit to come back after what has happened, and a night's rest will be the best thing in the world for her. I suppose you two have explained things to his Highness as well, eh?"

"Yes," I said, rising from my seat. "It has been explained to me. I do not understand all now, but I must think, and think alone, so I will go."

Then I went to Francis Hartness and held out my hand to him and said, after the fashion of the English:

"Good-night, Captain Hartness. You have wounded me sorely with your words, yet you have spoken them as only a friend could speak them. From now till the day of my death or yours, Vilcaroya Inca is your friend, and all his people are your servants."

Then I took my hand from his, and bowing farewell to the others, walked swiftly out of the room and got my cloak and went out into the city to think in silence by myself over the strange and terrible things that I had heard, and to calm my spirit before I went to do the work which in a few hours would be awaiting me on the hills behind the Sacsahuaman.

(To be continued.)

A WOMAN'S HONOUR.

IT was a snowy, blustering December night. Young Percy Padgett had arrived by an evening train from Oxford. Fresh from college, and scarcely twenty-two, he had come in the vanity of his youth to make himself an actor in the metropolis. It is true he is a successful architect now, and his name is not enrolled among the famous ones of the stage, but to make the public acknowledge his histrionic genius was then the first aspiration of his soul.

Before presenting his letters of introduction to the managers, and allowing them to fight out between themselves which should have him, he determined to devote a day or two to the inspection of the great city, which he now saw for the first time. So, after a hasty meal at the hotel, he sauntered out to mingle with the throng in the brilliant thoroughfare. Wearying of the glitter of Regent Street, he at last turned into one of the darker streets, to make his way towards Piccadilly, his curiosity impelling him thitherward, although the wind began to blow nippingly and the snow to come in thicker clouds.

The buildings were, as usual in these side streets, uniform, tall, and very exclusive in their frowning stateliness.

In several, however, there were bright lights, and from one especially there came the sounds of music and the merry laughter of children.

Homesick, lonely, and, truth to say, somewhat abashed by his first experience with the great world which he had thought so easy to conquer, he felt his heart glow under the inspiration of this mirth, and an uncontrollable curiosity seized him. The window curtains were drawn aside, and from the opposite side of the street a full view of the parlours and of the young merry-makers might be had.

The wanderer crossed, and, ascending the steps of the opposite house—a grand, but gloomy, unlighted mansion, and sheltering himself from the wind and snow under the projecting stonework about the doorway, enjoyed the moving spectacle with a zest that was brightened by his lonely position and dismal surroundings. He had been snugly ensconced in the doorway less than a minute, however, when the door suddenly opened behind him, nearly precipitating him into the hall.

A hand seized his arm, he was drawn in, and the door closed behind him.

"Hush! Follow me!" came a whisper in a woman's voice. All was dark save the faint light that made its way from a heavily-shaded library lamp in a back room, the door of which was open. Padgett would have asked for an explanation, but the female figure was already gliding up the stairs, and, being young and self-reliant, he reflected that he would prefer to follow out the adventure, even if he should have his choice, which he had not by any means, so far as the affair had gone.

The explanation might be made as well upstairs as down, he reasoned; so he pursued the mysterious figure. It flitted before him noiselessly, and then disappeared through a doorway on the second floor, through which a faint light came out to struggle ineffectually with the darkness.

Without further hesitation, he followed into an elegantly-furnished boudoir. The guide paused at a centre table, and turned up the shaded lamp, which had been burning dimly. Before him, with the table between them, stood a lovely woman, queenly in stature and grace of bearing, and attired with a taste that was in keeping with the refined air and haughty manner of the wearer.

No sooner did the increased light enable her to distinguish his features than the woman gave a stifled cry, and a look of horror distorted her beautiful face.

"What's this? You are not Walter Vane?" she cried.

"No, madam; I'm Percy Padgett, an actor in search of an engagement. What can I do for you?" replied the involuntary guest, with a desperate assurance.

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"What are you doing here? Go; leave me! You should not have come," moaned the lady, wringing her hands.

"If you will be cool and think a little, madam," he replied, "you'll recollect the fact that I am not to blame for being here—that I was, in fact, dragged in."

"I mistook you for another person. Now go away," said the unwilling hostess, in great terror.

"Fear nothing. I understand the mistake," said the young man, "although I must say it was a strange one."

"Go! Go!" she cried.

He bowed, and moved towards the door.

A sound made him pause. The woman heard it too. It was the opening and shutting of a heavy door to the hall. A step was ascending the staircase.

She sprang forward and laid her hand on his arm.

"Someone is coming," she whispered, in great agitation. "You cannot go now. Stay if you would save a woman's honour——"

"Anything to be obliging; but really my first evening in London is a lively one," assented the young man, as coolly as ever; "and where——"

Escape to the hall was impossible. The footsteps were drawing near, and in another moment the newcomer, cautiously as he was advancing, would be in the room.

Acting on the impulse of the moment, the visitor darted into a cupboard, the only hiding-place at hand, and had barely closed the door behind him when the second visitor arrived.

The cupboard door had, however, been left slightly ajar by Padgett in the haste of his retreat, and he had a partial view of what went on in the apartment after his retirement. He kept his eyes open to events, for his position was far from reassuring.

The new comer entered the apartment with some caution. He was not, then, the husband of the lady, as the would-be actor had supposed. What was going to happen now? He began to wish himself out of the scrape. Might he not find an opportunity to steal out, glide down the stairs, and so into the street? To be taken for a thief if caught in this plight? No, that would never do. He would stay where he was and trust to luck.

The last visitor was a tall handsome man, of soldierly bearing, blonde, blue-eyed, elegant in dress and manners, and not far beyond thirty. He cast a suspicious glance about him.

"We are alone?" he inquired.

The woman, who received him standing at the opposite side of the table, answered with a cold nod. Her air was more haughty and frigid than before.

"I was surprised that you risked leaving the door ajar for me. I took it for a good omen, Clara. Was I right?" remarked the guest.

The lady thus familiarly addressed started as if stung by the inference of his free tone, and replied deliberately, her petulance disappearing as her earnestness asserted itself:

"Mr Vane, this is the first interview we have had in three years."

"Yes, since the eve of your wedding, when you promised to elope with me. When I appeared at the rendezvous, you refused to keep your promise, and said you were simply amusing yourself with me. Then your marriage was hastened, and took place while I was waiting at another trysting place for you to keep your promise. So you made my humiliation complete. Oh, I don't forget it," interrupted the handsome visitor throwing open his fur-lined overcoat, and throwing himself nonchalantly into an easy chair.

The woman remained standing, pale with resolution, and resumed:

"I was a silly girl. I foolishly toyed with your affections, and Heaven knows I have had cause to regret my cruel folly. Since my marriage I have never known peace. You have pursued me everywhere with letters—abroad and at home. My servants have been bribed to hand me your missives in my husband's house, and strangers have thrust them into my hands in the streets, at the opera, or in the restaurant, forcing on me a secret correspondence that is my terror."

There was a slight sound from the cupboard. It was Padgett, making a desperate effort to restrain his desire "to hit that fellow just once," as he expressed it in a whisper. The visitor received this accusation coolly, and replied:

"True, but if you suffer, imagine my state. Is it nothing to lose the one woman you love? You may have pretended affection; I did not; I loved you in earnest, with all my heart, for ever."

The woman shuddered at the intensity of his tone. There was something alarming in it.

"Is he going to kill her?" thought Padgett, watching every movement keenly.

There was indeed a blaze of insanity in the eyes of the guest that would have alarmed the stoniest heart. The lady quailed a moment before him, but by a strong effort of the will recovered her self-possession and continued:

"You have demanded a personal and private interview that I may be still further compromised."

"Yes, I have asked this for years, confident that if I might speak with you and plead my suffering your own heart would judge me favourably," replied the visitor with a fierce earnestness.

"I? Another man's wife?" There was a preceptible softening in the tones of the woman's voice, despite the effort she made at indignation.

"His wife? No—he stole you! You are mine by right. A foolish impulse, a girlish prank made you his. Your heart is mine!"

The ferocity with which the man said this startled even Padgett, who was following the dramatic scene with eager attention from his place of concealment. The visitor had, for the moment, the air of a madman.

The woman shuddered and grew pale with terror, but with a mighty effort seemed to shake off her fear, and regained her self-possession. She went on, in her former cold and haughty tone:

"Finally, to effect your purpose, you had recourse to threats. You reminded me that during my girlish flirtation I had written you letters——"

"Yes, avowing your love, and agreeing to our elopement," interrupted the man bitterly.

The young wife trembled visibly at this reminder of her folly, but with an effort continued:

"You threatened to send those letters to my husband; but you seem to have relented, for I, though doubting you, have given you this rendezvous on the offer on your part to return my letters and cease this torture," said the lady, twitching her fingers nervously, as if eager to lay hands on the fatal missives.

"And I have kept my promise," returned her handsome guest. "Here they are."

He drew a packet from a pocket of his coat and placed it on the table. The woman bounded forward with the

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air of a tigress, and laid her hand on them. He still retained them with a firm hold, however, and thus they remained.

"One moment," said he. "Remember, when you take these they are my gift, in the hope that pity may assert itself in your heart, that you may be led to a similar generosity in restoring me my happiness as I restore you yours."

Her eyes met his with a soft, languishing expression. He released the packet, and she drew it to her eagerly. Tearing off the wrapping she ran her eyes over the dozen dainty little billets with a hungry glare, casting each into the flame of the open grate, where the fire was sending up its bright and cheering flames. The last she set on fire, holding it in her hand until it was consumed, and fell in ashes at her feet. A glitter of triumph shone in her eyes, and her form straightened up proudly. Fixing on her guest a look of mingled scorn and hate, she exclaimed:

"Fool! My long slavery is at an end! You are disarmed, and I am free!"

"I am not disarmed!" he cried, suddenly changing his manner from soft humility to violent command. "I had not faith in you, I suspected your false heart. Here, I have retained the most compromising of all your letters—that proposing the elopement three years ago. It bears no date, and no one could prove that it was not written yesterday. Here it is, sealed in this stamped envelope, and bearing the club address of your husband."

The woman grew pale.

"I held this," he resumed moodily, as he replaced the letter in his pocket, "in the hope of forcing your heart to awaken to the old love; but you have shown me how false it is. Such a heart as yours, madam, is not worth the leading away, as I might lead it by the chain I hold here. But my sufferings at your hands must be avenged, and your cruel heart must have a bitter punishment. This is my revenge."

He took from his pocket a carefully-folded paper, and shaking a greenish powder into a glass half filled with water, which stood on the table, swallowed the mixture at a gulp.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the lady, regarding her visitor with a look of intense horror.

"I mean that I have taken poison," he replied wildly; "that in a few minutes I shall be a corpse. When your husband and your friends return account for my presence as you may. Reflect that you have wrecked my life, that you have been the cause of my death!"

As he said the last words his speech became thick, his eyes rolled wildly in their sockets, he staggered, balanced a moment erect, with a horrible smile on his twitching and distorted features, and then pitching forward, fell to the floor on his face, with a dreadful thud, and lay there motionless. The lady gave a shriek, and rushed forward to save him. She only caught his arm, however, and the weight of his body brought her to her knees beside him. She put her arms about him and turned his face up to the light.

"Dead! dead!" she cried frantically, dropping the head of the corpse in her terror. Then, on a sudden impulse, she began an eager search of the body, ending in the production of the sealed letter the dead man had so boastfully displayed. Tottering forward towards the grate she flung it into the fire, and, with an hysterical laugh, watched it burn.

As she turned she found herself face to face with young Padgett. He was pale and evidently horror-stricken. She trembled violently at the sight of him. In the excitement of the terrible scene she had quite forgotten the presence of the unbidden witness.

She shrank from him as from an accuser.

Pointing to the corpse, she cried: "They will say I murdered him!" and fell to the floor in a deep swoon.

Padgett stood for a moment bewildered between the living and the dead; then, suddenly arousing himself, exclaimed: "He was a crazy scoundrel, and he did the right thing to kill himself. But to do it here! What an awful revenge if it be carried out to the end! But it shan't be if I can help it!"

The rash young Padgett made his way down the stairs, opened the street door wide, stepped out, and looked up and down the street. Not a soul was visible. The snow was coming down in a blinding cloud, and the wind was driving it into heavy drifts. Returning to the apartment where he had passed an hour of such terrifying captivity, he, without more ado, seized the contorted corpse of the crazy lover, and shouldering it, staggered down the staircase with his gruesome burden.

Out into the drifts he made his way, and through the storm-torn mists of the night.

The next morning the body of Walter Vane was found some distance away, lying in a snow drift near the haunt of the bad characters who frequent one of the side streets. It seemed plain to the coroner that the young man had been drugged and robbed.

Padgett had no inclination to reveal the truth, so he did not appear to correct the error. He had saved the honour of a woman, and defeated the ends of a villain or a maniac. The woman he never met or heard of again; but a month later, when led to her home with his curiosity, he found the house vacant, and on inquiring of a servant lounging at the gateway of an adjacent residence, he learnt that the occupants, an invalid lady and her husband, had gone abroad, and the dwelling was for sale.

ANNIE DAVIS.

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KILLED BY MISTAKE

"I TOLD you I left Bradley's, didn't I?" he began, after a pause, and then continued in a dull, monotonous voice, as though repeating a lesson, "well, that was in '60, and from there I joined a large circus and menagerie that travelled about from place to place, stopping at the large towns, or where we were likely to get an audience. I got on very well with them, for in those days it was something out of the common to see performances on the trapeze, and I took immensely.

"I was dressed in skins to resemble a cat, with a tail all complete, and only my face was left exposed; and here, for the first time, I found my strong arms and small light body an advantage, for as the children—little guessing the reason—used to declare, I looked 'exactly like a cat'; and as the money taken increased nightly, I naturally rose into high favour with the circus-master.

"There was only one other in my line, and that was a girl—Lizzie. She was very beautiful, and she was very good, and from the first she took a curious liking for me, which astonished no one more than it did myself. Partly we were thrown very much together, for of course we practised a good deal, and then there were new tricks to be learned, and so on; partly she was a quiet, gentle sort of girl, very different from the rest of the troupe, and then I knew she pitied me, and pity, they say, leads to love.

"From the first moment that I saw her sweet, serious face I had worshipped her as the loveliest and purest thing that had ever come into my hard and miserable life, so when, after two years' patient waiting, Lizzie taught me the words that otherwise I should never have dared to utter, I spoke them in all thankfulness, and held her to me with such a sense of rapturous bliss that angels might have envied. And so we were married, and one short month after, a third performer, Wintle by name, came to join us.

"How intensely I grew to loathe that man no words can tell. He was a fine, tall man, with a quiet wit, and steady nerve, and strong as a giant. When Lizzie came flying through the air—for we had new tricks now, of which he was the mainstay—he would catch her in his arms and run with her up the ropes, while I, poor cripple, knew were I to attempt it it would mean death to us both.

"I stood below, envying him for his strength, and hating him for the power it gave him. Lizzie liked him. She told me so many times, never dreaming of the jealous, watchful gaze; I looked after them as they dived, and flew, and swung together; and so the weeks went on.

"At last, Bates (the manager) arranged a regular little play to be acted by us three while we were in the air, and every one predicted it would be an enormous success. I was to retain my famous part, by which I had gained my name of the cat-clown; Lizzie, with her sweet face and innocent, child-like eyes, was to be queen of the fairies; Robert Wintle was to be her earthly lover; and the first performance was to take place on the fifth of November.

"One of my great hits was to be counterfeiting terror at a position in which I had been placed by the queen's orders. It was an immense height, almost at the top of the building, and far away from any staves or ropes, so that after the rope which conveyed me there was withdrawn, I was utterly powerless to descend.

"The way I hung on to the bar, and my ludicrous efforts to maintain my seat, were declared inimitable by the manager and the ground clowns, and I anticipated a splendid piece of business on the grand night. We were three weeks rehearsing it, and it was during that time I first noticed a secret understanding between my Lizzie and Wintle.

"He seemed uneasy, embarrassed, most unlike his usual self, but he followed Lizzie like her shadow, and I followed him. I saw it all now, but alas! too late. Bitterly I reproached myself with having let her marry me through pity, and it was the thought that it was only pity I had won that was the hardest sting of all. But none the less surely did I hate the man who had succeeded where I had failed, and none the less was I set on my revenge.

"At last I overheard some words of theirs, not many. A few gentle words from Wintle—a kiss—a sigh—a murmur of 'Robert, I am so happy' in a girl's voice, and then, as I drew back from the darkness, my wife came from the room and passed me, with a glad smile upon her lips. I followed her. Not to accuse her. I left that for others to do, when my work should have succeeded, but I went straight to the circus and clambered up the ropes to the platform from which we started.

"There were no men about to interrupt me. Even had there been no one would have dreamed of interfering, for it was my daily business to see to every catch and rope, and bar, before the performance took place, and it now wanted but an hour to the time, and the grand night, too, as I thought, with fiendish glee, as I scrambled over the netting and felt it all with care; I gave very particular care to one bar, and then I descended and looked up.

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"One of the grandest bits of this fairy scene was towards the end, when Lizzie, as the queen, was flying at the left side of the netting, and Wintle, at the extreme right, was executing some wonderful gymnastics on the horizontal bar. He wound up by jerking himself off into space, and then, after turning a somersault, catching by his knees to another bar which hung some twelve feet below. It was a very difficult trick, and one over which he was nervous, for should the lower bar by any miraculous chance give way, nothing could prevent him falling, and as in such a position it was impossible to calculate distances, he would be quite as likely to fall outside as inside the net.

"The entertainment was half over, the Peruvian horses had been duly admired, and the jugglers' tricks were finished, when the band struck up an inspiriting march, composed in our honour, and before the applause which greeted our entrance had subsided, we were hanging on the central rope, and bowing our acknowledgments—the new play had begun.

"They cheered us to the echo. Never had fairy looked more lovely than Lizzie in her silver dress; the prince was charming, the cat superb, every one declared, and then following on the applause came a breathless silence as they awaited the grand finale.

I was swung up to my lofty perch, and the 'courtship,' as we called the coquetting on the tight-rope, soon began below me.

"Lizzie advancing from the right and Wintle from the left, they were to cross each other in the centre and each to go to the opposite end, and then to begin those 'fairy flights' which brought the play to a conclusion. Seated there, while continuing my own business of mock fright and dismay, my straining eyes were fixed upon those two—the wife who had betrayed me, and the man who had dared to win her from me.

"Wilder and wilder grow my actions as I dodge to and fro on my perch for fear I should lose one movement of theirs; and the laughter rings from below as bright eyes fix upon me. 'Look at the clown! look at his antics!' they cry, and I—I am nearly blinded by my whole soul rushing to my eyes as I hang there waiting—waiting to see him fall. See, now he waves the fan, the signal she should pass him.

"Now, Lizzie, gently! Why, what is this? She draws back, whispering something; her lips move. I cannot catch the words, but I know their meaning. 'She hasn't the nerve,' she says, 'to-night; she cannot pass him,' and—am I blind? Am I falling? She turns back the same way, to the right, to his side! 'Lizzie!'

"In good earnest I hang forward, now collecting my strength for a warning cry—'Lizzie!' Is it my voice that sounds in that half-choked agonised whisper that scarcely stirs the air about me? I turn my eyes to the audience below, gesticulating wildly for the help that in a few minutes will be too late, but they laugh back their answers to me. How splendidly I am acting to-night!

"I must get down a rope—Where is my rope?—and I turn to clutch at the support which carried me up just as she reaches the topmost bar—I—I forgot. They took it away. My hand closes on empty air, and then—a few minutes of awful, sickening terror, while the ringing cheers burst forth afresh, and the fairy swings gaily to and fro—and, then, a frightful scream, a rush of horror-stricken people towards the useless net, and in their midst, there, on the cruel floor, Lizzie—my Lizzie—dead!

"I do not know how I got down, I don't know anything that happened after that, except that I saw Wintle married. He married a girl belonging to the troupe; and she told me it was Lizzie who had arranged it all quietly for them, and that it was to her, and not to Lizzie, that the kiss and the words had been given. But somehow," added the man wearily, "I don't seem to be able to think of that.

"It's now ten years ago to-day," he began again, presently; and when, after a few words of sympathy, I was obliged to leave him, he was still mechanically repeating the words which had just attracted me, "Lizzie, killed by mistake."

W. H.

On WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9,

We shall publish the First Number of a New Weekly Paper, to be called:

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It will consist wholly of continued stories. The opening chapters of eight entirely new novels will be found in the first number.

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Apartments to Let.

It must be said that Anatole Pluchin was on the eve of getting married. These things may happen to anybody, and I don't mention the fact in order to ask your pity on his behalf, because his *fiancée* was a charming girl. Her name was Andree—delightful name! She was blonde. She was twenty years and seven months old—attractive age! She belonged to a family that was worthy of all respect—a fact to be considered.

That rogue Anatole! He knew the young girl was in love with him—madly in love with him. Had she not confessed to him that she would die rather than marry another? I know well that these things are often said and rarely executed. But in this case, although Andree was a blonde, she was the owner of an energetic and decided character.

Doubtless it was this strong temperament that prevented her parents from making any objections, and placing any obstacles in her way. It was no use talking to Andree!

"You know, mamma," she repeated again and again, "I want this matter to be finished quickly."

"But, my dear child, there are certain delays and certain formalities——"

"The delays can be hurried."

"That is true."

"And the formalities can be simplified."

"I have no objections, dear, if it will give you pleasure."

"Then, mamma, let us consider the engagement as settled."

"Settled! Your lover has only exchanged a very few words with your father."

"You know that my father does what you wish; let us waste no more time discussing it. I shall be married on the 10th of next month. Let us start the campaign."

"Start the campaign? What do you mean?"

"Find apartments."

"Yes; but——"

"To-morrow morning, then, we will start out. To-morrow, directly after breakfast, for apartments are sometimes difficult to find. Now, mamma, let me give you a kiss, you are so good."

She spoke the truth. Her mother was an excellent creature, and Anatole Pluchin was—well, his mother, her future mother-in-law, was of the kind that are nowadays seldom to be found.

The day following, at the appointed hour, Andree was ready to attack Paris and ransack it from end to end in her endeavours to find the nest—that is, the apartments—of her dreams. Her valiant mother was prepared to accompany her. The poor old woman had burned her throat with her coffee, and had nearly choked herself over the sugar at the bottom of the cup.

Young and inexperienced Andree little knew what a terrible thing it is to hunt for rooms in Paris; to climb up dozens and dozens of steps, and to undergo the searching questioning of zealous *concierges* and indiscreet *portieres*.

After an hour and a half of this exercise, the unfortunate girl was exhausted. And her mother! She followed her daughter, puffing like a grampus, and dragging her legs after her as if they were logs of heavy timber. "Ouf! Ouf! Ouf!"

Then at length: "Mamma, look at that pretty house with a view from the back windows over the gardens. Let us ask the price. I have an idea that it will be just the thing."

The price was just what the girl had judged reasonable for herself and her future husband.

"Let us go upstairs," cried Andree, who was delighted. "We can see over it, can we not?" she asked the *concierge*.

"Certainly, mademoiselle."

"Is any one living here now?" asked the mother.

"A young widow, madame."

"Ah!" remarked the mother, "and doubtless she wishes to leave a house that has painful memories for her."

A flashily dressed girl opened the door in answer to their ring.

"These ladies desire to see the apartments," explained the *concierge*.

The girl made a remark in a low voice, that escaped the others' ears. It was accompanied by an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

"*Entrez!*" she said aloud.

Andree and her mother walked in. Everything most comfortable. Quite a discovery, in fact. The furniture was commodious and elegant, and placed each piece in the corner where it suited best. And the appointments! And the cupboards! And the kitchen! And the arrangement of the light! The visitors were completely charmed.

As they turned a corner of the corridor the mother looked in the direction of Andree, and said:

"Andree, I think it must be your good star that guided us here."

But she stopped suddenly.

"Why, where are you, Andree? Where can she have gone to? Andree!"

A distant and sorrowful cry came in answer.

"Andree! What's the matter?" cried her mother alarmed.

This is what had happened. Andree, inquisitive little girl that she was, had turned down a passage, and suddenly opened a door. She was curious to see what the room was like.

The door, it so happened, was that of a private boudoir. Inside, as she stood, pretty as a fairy, in the doorway, she saw a velvet sofa. On the sofa she saw, half reclining, a very pretty young widow with black eyes and a demurely sweet face. Kneeling on the soft Turkish rug beside her, with his hand upon his heart and an expression of eternal love upon his face, was a young man.

Andree heard no words, but the noise of opening the door caused the young man to spring to his feet and face her.

"Ah! *ma foi!* Andree!"

It was indeed Anatole.

* * * * * *

Andree possessed a resolute character, as we know. She never saw Anatole again, and the amount the courts granted her for breach of promise of marriage is not exactly known.

In this way a mother-in-law who was anxious to do all she could for her son-in-law only succeeded in bringing about results that were a hundred times worse than the most bitter hostilities.

Such is the irony of fate, and doubtless it was best for the happiness of *la belle* Andree.

B. S. K.

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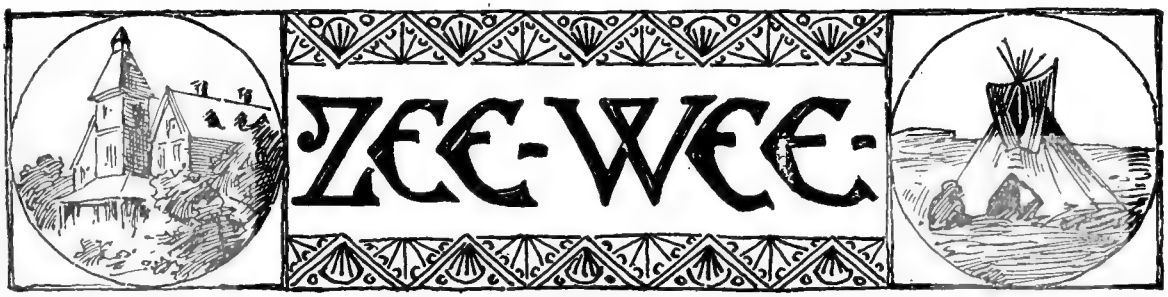

I.

ZEE-WEE and her twin sister, Wauska, resembled each other like two peas. They were the daughters of the Dacotah chief, Don't Know How. Their mother was named Minona, and she was the wife of her husband. Altogether, she was the prettiest squaw in the village, and there were those who declared that her match for beauty was not to be found in the whole Dacotah nation. Much was said, too, about the exorbitant price that was paid for her—being a fleet horse, a six-barreled Colt revolver, and three blankets. She was, indeed, a woman of rare worth.

Twins were infrequent in the Dacotah nation, and Don't Know How was none too well pleased when Minona presented him with two girls. One of them always seemed to him superfluous, but he could never decide which, as he had no way of telling them apart. Even the mother had her doubts as to which was Zee-Wee and which Wauska, until they were four or five years old, and the dominant spirit of the one differentiated her from her gentle sister.

It may have been Wauska who was the enterprising one, and Zee-Wee who imitated her; but the mother, either by chance or guided by a deeper instinct, decided differently. The name Zee-Wee gradually attached itself to the adventurous maiden, and the shy and docile sister became identified as Wauska.

Two more children were born to Minona in the course of years, and they were both girls. Then Don't Know How became seriously alarmed, and took unto himself two more wives. These were much cheaper than Minona had been, so he could afford to indulge himself.

Wandered away to the nearest Government agency.

But when they had borne each a man-child, and felt their position assured, they leagued themselves against the favourite and drove her out of the tepee. There was a hot battle outside, and the chief sat calmly and looked on, while Minona was beaten, scratched, torn, and knocked down, and trampled upon.

It was not his habit, he said, to mix in woman's business. Even when Minona arose, bruised and bleeding from the snow, he sat imperturbable, with crossed legs and made no motion to help her. Her children were thrown out to her, one after another, by her victorious rivals, and she picked up the youngest in her arms, and gathering the rest around her, wandered away to the nearest Government agency. There the doctor put plasters and salves upon her wounds, and she was well cared for.

The white folks were kind to her, and she was warm and comfortable. When, therefore, the missionary asked her for one of her little girls, promising to have her educated like the pale-faces, she pushed over to him the one she believed to be Wauska; and it was not until the next day she discovered that it was Zee-Wee with whom she had parted. She wanted to rectify her mistake (for Zee-Wee, in spite of the confusion of identity, was the apple of her eye,) but it was too late. Zee-Wee had been sent with a dozen other children to the Lyleham Institute, in charge of the missionary.

The next day Don't Know How came to the agency and demanded his wife. She was reluctant to go with him, until he guaranteed her revenge and protection. But back she went at last; and she sat perfectly unmoved, with her feet drawn up under her, while the two cantankerous wives got their beating.

She was not a little afraid that she might be called to account for parting with Zee-Wee without his consent. But her mind was soon at rest. A month elapsed before her husband referred to Zee-Wee's absence, and when she explained, somewhat timidly, what had become of her, he only said, "How," and never referred to her again.

II.

FOURTEEN years had passed, and Zee-Wee was twenty years old. She was the cleverest Indian girl that had ever been graduated from the Lyleham Institute. During the last years of her stay she had acted as a teacher to the younger children of her race; and she had been so successful in this work that there was a prospect of her obtaining a permanent engagement.

But Zee-Wee's heart yearned for her own people. Her mission, she said, was to spread the light of civilisation among the Dacotahs. Her father, the chief, of whom she had scarcely the dimmest recollection,

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appeared to her fancy as a stern and noble savage, sage and eloquent, of kingly mien and bearing, ruling his tribe with paternal despotism.

She would go back to this father, who must have sorely missed her during all these years, and would be a daughter to him in very truth, guessing his desires and ministering to his wants. She felt herself as a princess of the forest, and there was something touchingly pathetic in her situation which appealed mightily to her. Not once, but a hundred times, had the teachers of the Institute impressed upon her and her fellow pupils their solemn responsibility to their savage kinsmen. They were to be the torch-bearers of light in the dusk of the primeval woods, and the future of the whole Indian race (which otherwise would be doomed to extinction) depended upon them.

There was among the teachers at the Lyleham Institute an enthusiastic young lady named Marion Gallaudet, who had conceived a passionate friendship for Zee-Wee. She was one of those restless women who are always hungering for a mission, and professing a great contempt for those who have none.

Zee-Wee was not deep enough, perhaps, to be aware that she herself presented herself to Miss Gallaudet in the light of a mission. Far less could she make allowance for the exaggeration of a mind thus constituted. It was to Miss Gallaudet's unwearied efforts that she owed her own mission—her resolution to devote her life to the redemption of her tribe from the degradation of savagery.

Many and many an evening she sat with Miss Gallaudet in her neat and pretty little room, weaving the romances of their futures, embellishing them with fresh touches, borrowed from Cooper, Chateaubriand, and Longfellow.

Zee-Wee would marry, of course, an Indian chief, and the more savage the better, in order that she might lift him up to her level, or, as her friend phrased it, permeate his savage nature with the sweetness of her pure womanhood. Her instructress, too, had made up her mind to bestow her precious self upon a proud son of the forest; and while she sat in her luxurious easy chair, toasting her toes before her fire, would descant in enraptured tones upon the soul-expanding freedom of woods and prairies, and the wholesome discipline of hardship.

III.

The Indian village, consisting of forty or fifty wigwams, was pitched about four miles from the Government agency. It was early in September, and the heat was oppressive.

Everybody seemed asleep. Even the dogs were disinclined to stir; only now and then one of them rose, with lolling tongue, stretched himself lazily, and after a sleepy survey of the surroundings, lay down again with his head between his forepaws. Smoke rose only from a single wigwam, over the entrance to which was an unpainted board, bearing an inscription in lamp black:

D. K. HOW, TRADER.

The article which D. K. How traded in (although only surreptitiously) seemed to have affected his powers of locomotion; for he lay snoring heavily in the hot sun in front of his tepee in a place and position which he scarcely would have chosen with deliberate intent.

The sound of hoof-beats upon the prairie startled the dogs, and half-a-dozen of them, conquering their lethargy, began to bark in a languidly perfunctory fashion. The hoof-beats came nearer, and some more dogs awoke and joined in the chorus of salutation. A well-grown and rather good-looking Indian girl put her head out of the opening of D. K. How's wigwam to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

What she saw was a young woman of her own race, accompanied by a sergeant in uniform from the Government post. She rode on a side-saddle, and was dressed like a white lady, with shoes on her feet and a straw hat with feathers on her head. There was something dainty and neat about her which greatly impressed the occupant of the wigwam.

"Do you know where I can find the chief, Don't Know How?" she asked, vigorously smoothing down her skirts (for she was not in riding habit) and fidgeting with a parasol which she had apparently been using as a whip.

The savage maiden stared from the sergeant to her questioner, as if she did not comprehend.

"Why, miss," the sergeant exclaimed, as he caught sight of the sleeping figure at his horse's feet, "that's him; that's Don't Know How."

Zee-Wee, who had carefully backed her pony in order to avoid stepping on the sleeper, leapt from the saddle, and stood long regarding him with a look of anxious scrutiny.

"Is he ill?" she asked.

"No; only drunk," replied the sergeant reassuringly.

Zee-Wee had told herself many times on the way that she must not pitch her expectations too high; she had tried to prepare herself for a possible disappointment. But how far were all her imaginings from the reality that confronted her! With a sinking heart she stooped over the prostrate man, and gently shaking him, cried in his ear: "Father! It is I—Zee-Wee—who have come back to you."

With an embroidered handkerchief (which was a present from Miss Gallaudet) she brushed the mosquitoes from his face, and wiped away the beads of perspiration from his forehead. She could not repress a little shiver of disgust at the alcoholic fumes which enveloped him. She saw his heavy, drunken eyes open with a look of sullen stupor; but she bravely conquered her impulse to run, and, kneeling at his side, she repeated, sweetly:

"Father! It is I—Zee-Wee. Don't you know me—Zee-Wee, your daughter?"

Don't Know How gave a savage growl, as if he resented being disturbed, then raised himself into a sitting posture, and began to rub his eyes with the backs of his grimy hands. The sergeant, who had lost all patience with the brute, gave him a kick, and cried: "Get up there, quick. You'll get the jimjams if you go to sleep in the sun, like a pig."

The chief gave another sullen growl, and, discarding Zee-Wee's proffered hand, struggled into an approximately perpendicular position. Thus he remained for a minute or more, swaying slightly to the right and to the left, doubtful whether to trust his legs in an experiment of locomotion. His features wore a meditative air, which made the sergeant laugh and Zee-Wee shudder. The former, as his presence definitely penetrated Don't Know How's consciousness, aroused in his mind a dim suspicion. Pulling himself together, he reeled past him, and, making a random dive for the entrance to the tepee, disappeared in the dusk within.

A greyish pallor suffused Zee-Wee's brown cheeks. Her breath came in spasmodic gasps, her eyes dilated, and from her lips issued a half-stifled sound, which was

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half a moan and half a sigh. She looked forlorn, forsaken, bitterly disillusionised. The sergeant felt sorry for her, and remarked, by way of consolation:

"Could have told you before, miss, that that Indian trash wasn't worth looking up. Get into the saddle again, and we'll ride back to the agency."

He held out his hand to swing her into the saddle, but she stood gazing at him dismally, and made no motion to accept his offer. Her limbs seemed numb, her faculties paralysed. She was afraid to think, and bit her lips in the effort to keep the thoughts at bay.

Presently the same face that ten minutes ago had obscured the opening reappeared, and the same comely Indian girl, in scant attire, stood eyeing Zee-Wee with an air of timid deprecation. One of her shoulders was bare, and a much dilapidated garment of some cheap striped stuff hung, loosely suspended, from the other. The dull fatigue in Zee-Wee's glance suddenly vanished at the sight of her; a new emotion flared up and visibly struggled in her features.

"Wauska?" she asked, a little awkwardly. "Are you my twin sister, Wauska?"

She was obviously afraid of being rebuffed, and therefore strove to restrain her agitation.

"Wauska — yes. Me Wauska," answered the other, nodding vigorously.

"I am Zee-Wee. You know Zee-Wee?"

"Me know Zee-Wee—yes."

"Where is my mother, Wauska?" she asked tremulously.

Wauska looked blank, and only nodded vaguely, when the question was repeated.

"Where is Minona—*my* mother—*your* mother?" Zee-Wee reiterated slowly, and with much emphasis on each syllable. Wauska, without a shadow of emotion, turned to the sergeant, addressing to him a few strangely guttural sounds in her own language.

"Wauska says that her mother has been dead for many years," explained the latter in English. "She wants to know whether her sister has forgotten her Indian speech."

"I am sorry, Wauska, that I have," wailed Zee-Wee.

An oppressive sense of helplessness, of boundless impotence and weariness, crept over her like a cold chill, which was now followed by a dull, stinging pain in the region of the chest. Her heart felt heavy as lead. She was too sad to weep. Should she return with the sergeant to the agency, and weakly abandon her mission? Her face betrayed to him but little emotion, and when, to precipitate the issue, he mounted his horse, she still stood irresolute.

"Well, Zee-Wee," he said, seizing the bridle of her pony, "toss up a penny. Head, Indian; tail, white."

Wauska.

Suiting the action to his words, he flung a coin into the air; but the horse, mistaking the meaning of the gesture, backed and stepped on the coin. "Sure it was tail," he cried; "come along, now, or you'll regret it."

He looked at her with cheery encouragement; but, as she slowly shook her head, he whipped up both horses and rode away.

IV.

As soon as the sergeant was out of sight, Wauska stepped out from the tepee, and, with true Indian stolidity, stood staring at her sister. It was a summer wigwam, about twenty feet wide, and surrounded by a raised platform, the width of which was about six feet. Two mongrel dogs, which had been viewing Zee-Wee with suspicion, now came up and smelt her, and, having made sure of her respectability, withdrew, peevishly stretched themselves, yawned, and lay down to resume their slumber in the shadow of the lodge. Two naked children of five or six years had also discovered Zee-Wee, and stood in the middle of the road, regarding her, like images of stone, with imperturbable composure.

The sense of oppression, anxiety—nay, of helpless fright—which had hovered with its icy breath on the outskirts of her mind, now reasserted itself, and a sudden faintness came over her. Her knees tottered; her head was in a whirl. She staggered towards the platform where the dogs were lying, and sat down on the edge of it.

Now that she had cut off her retreat, she felt as if she had surrendered herself to some terrible unknown power from which no mercy was to be expected. Again she clasped her head tightly in her hands, and strove desperately to conquer her fear.

Looking up, she saw Wauska seated on the ground before her; but her placid features evinced neither curiosity nor interest, far less sympathy or affection. Her black, bead-like eyes glittered uneasily, as if she, too, had some apprehension of danger. For fully an hour they sat thus, silently gazing at each other, each trying to explore the other's soul.

Meanwhile the shadow of the tepee had swung round until the platform was exposed to the full glare of the sun. Zee-Wee arose. She had fought the battle to the bitter end. Her mind was clear and calm. "Wauska," she said, "I'm going to speak to my father."

The uneasy light in Wauska's eyes brightened, and she sprang up and grasped her sister's hand.

"Zee-Wee, no go," she ejaculated, in a breathless staccato. "Chief drunk now—Zee-Wee wait! Chief sober——"

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"No," Zee-Wee answered, turning her unfaltering eyes upon her astonished sister; "I must go now."

The old heroism had come back to her. Doubt and weakness had fled. She could have gone to the stake unflinchingly, cheerfully; torture and death had lost their terrors.

Don't Know How had awakened from his drunken sleep, and sat peevishly scratching his head, when his daughter confronted him.

"I have come to stay with you, father," she said with lofty serenity; "I have been away from you for fourteen years. Now I want to be a help and comfort to you, if you will let me."

The chief sat with his immobile face peering into the dusk, in which the figure of his daughter dimly defined itself against the uncovered opening.

"How!" he exclaimed, whether by way of greeting or as an expression of surprise she could not determine—"how!"

"You surely remember Zee-Wee, your daughter?" she continued, in a voice of entreaty—"Zee-Wee, Minona's child, who went away with the white missionary to be educated? Now she has come back, and wants to teach her Indian kin."

"Zee-Wee come back—Minona's papoose," he jerked forth.

The memory of the half-forgotten incident was obviously revived, and a vague expression of intelligence passed over his features.

"Yes, yes," cried Zee-Wee, delighted; "and you are glad to see Zee-Wee again—glad that she has come back?"

"Crooked Gun—that his squaw—Small Pigeon."

"Wehakha not like Zee-Wee. Wehakha beat Zee-Wee; Wehakha drive Zee-Wee away," he observed, after a meditative pause.

"Wehakha?"

She was about to add: "Who is Wehakha?" when it dawned upon her that Wehakha was probably her father's wife. The presence of a stepmother, and especially one who might be expected to beat her, was not an agreeable prospect to Zee-Wee, but she conquered herself and answered, in her sweetest tones: "But my father will protect Zee-Wee. Zee-Wee will not provoke the anger of Wehakha."

The chief plainly regarded this as a problematic proposition. He vouchsafed no reply, but began to scratch his head once more, with a look of sulky preoccupation. The heat within the wigwam and the foul odour which pervaded the air made Zee-Wee anxious to terminate the interview, and she seized this opportunity to withdraw and rejoin Wauska outside.

V.

Zee-Wee had been five or six hours in her father's wigwam before food was set before her. When, tortured by hunger, she had asked Wauska about the time for dinner, she had learned that there was no definite hour for any meal, but that people ate when they were hungry. It was at six or seven o'clock in the evening, when the sun was near setting, that food was offered her, consisting of hominy and dried beef. As the rank odour inside the tepee almost nauseated her, she begged leave to sit on the outer platform, and, as her father nodded his head in token of assent, she made her escape as quickly as possible, and with difficulty forced down the unappetising morsels.

It was while she was thus occupied that she became aware of a broad-shouldered, squat young Indian, who was standing before the opening of the opposite lodge, regarding her with the sort of attention with which a cat watches the movements of a bird up in a tree.

There was something hard, wooden, impenetrable in its stolid inexpressiveness, and yet there seemed to be lurking in his eyes a feline alertness which made her shiver. He wore trousers with ornamental fringes, and a shirt which came down to his knees.

A young squaw, who looked cowed and frightened, came out of the wigwam and spoke to him, and Zee-Wee seemed to feel that he was inquiring about her. She heard repeatedly the words: "How, how!" and, though she could understand nothing, she yet listened with a nervous tension, as if her own fate were involved in that conversation. An insidious chill stole over her, and her former visions of frenzied dances, accompanied by savage yells, tortures, and agonised screams, returned to her.

Zee-Wee was interrupted in her reflections by Wauska, who came out and again seated herself on the ground in front of her, with her feet pulled up on the right side. The two sisters gazed at each other regretfully, each yearning to confide in the other. There was tenderness in Zee-Wee's glance, and in Wauska's a dawning light of admiration and half-embarrassed affection. She extended her hand repeatedly with the desire to touch the little gold cross which depended from a string of amber beads about Zee-Wee's neck; but each time her embarrassment got the better of her courage, and she slowly withdrew her hand, with a smile of sheepish deprecation.

"Wauska," said Zee-Wee, when this pantomime had continued for several minutes, "who is the man that

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stands before the wigwam opposite? Tell me his name, please."

She made a slight motion with her head to indicate the direction.

"Crooked Gun," answered Wauska.

"Crooked Gun—is that his name?"

"Crooked Gun—that his squaw—Small Pigeon," she added, by way of amplification.

Whether Crooked Gun divined that he was the subject of discussion, or he had a definite errand, he presently crossed the road and paused in front of the sisters. He addressed some questions in the Indian tongue to Wauska, glancing sideways at Zee-Wee, whose heart began to beat with so tumultuous a throb that she wondered whether he could not hear it.

Twice she lifted her grave eyes to his face with a mute appeal, but each time she recoiled from the sight, and the pitiless immobility of his features again chilled her blood with fear. It was especially his low, beetling brow and his evil, thin-lipped mouth that repelled her; while his narrow, gleaming eyes, surlily fixed upon her, filled her with a nameless apprehension.

When Wauska had satisfied his curiosity, Crooked Gun slouched his heavy shoulders forward, and, turning upon his heel, entered the wigwam. Instantly the conversation, which had recently flagged, revived, and the harsh croak of Wehakha's voice was heard above the quiet deliberations of the men. A dull flush of excitement glowed upon Wauska's dusky cheeks, and her eyes began to glitter with an unnatural brightness.

"What is it, Wauska?" asked Zee-Wee anxiously.

Wauska responded with a lively mimic injunction to keep silent. She sat immovable, with her hand to her ear, a dilated stare in her fixed bead-like eyes.

"Oh, Wauska, Wauska, what is it?" cried Zee-Wee, with a thrill of panic. "Does he want to kill me?"

"Crooked Gun—he marry Zee-Wee," Wauska replied, in a whispered staccato.

"Oh, no, no, Wauska! It isn't possible! He has a wife already."

"Indian have two wife—three wife—as much wife he like," Wauska obligingly explained.

"But he doesn't know me, Wauska. He has never seen me until to-day. You are mistaken, surely. It is you he wants to marry."

Wauska was too much absorbed in listening to pay any heed to these exclamations; and it was not until her sister had repeated them in a voice of tremulous entreaty that she observed, placidly: "Crooked Gun no marry Wauska."

Zee-Wee sat long—stunned, bewildered. She felt wounded in her pride, revolted in her sense of propriety, outraged in her womanhood. Should she permit herself to be disposed of like a chattel to the first savage who made a bid for her? She writhed with an anguish of humiliation at the thought of all the sentiments she had wasted upon this father who was now bartering her away for a horse, or a rifle, or half-a-dozen blankets. She could hear within the bargaining of the two men and the occasional croaking of Wehakha, who was either objecting to the price or urging its acceptance.

There are no wounds more stinging than those of vanity. Zee-Wee's self-esteem shrank woefully during that torturing half-hour. She felt in one moment paltry, cowed, and insignificant; but in the next wrath came to her assistance, and her courage rebounded. She would fight to the last ditch. She would never, never, never submit.

VI.

The next morning Zee-Wee was curtly informed by her father that she was to marry Crooked Gun that very day; and she learnt incidentally from Wauska that the price her suitor was to pay for her was a Winchester rifle, a powder-horn, and five blankets. He had ridden to the agency at an early hour for the purpose of procuring the rifle by theft or by barter, and he was expected back at noon.

Zee-Wee walked about, dumbly wringing her hands in tearless torture and shivering apprehension. She was well aware that she was watched, and that an attempt at escape would be futile. She implored and entreated her father to be permitted to return to the Government post, and pledged herself to send him handsome presents from the Institute, where she would be able to earn money; but he evidently distrusted promises extorted by fear, preferring one modest bird in the hand to ten gorgeous ones in a very remote bush.

It was two hours past noon when Zee-Wee's suitor presented himself in front of the wigwam, followed by his squaw, Small Pigeon, who was carrying the purchase price of her future rival. The rifle was duly delivered, and was found to be in good order; likewise the five blankets; but the powder-horn was missing. Crooked Gun offered some excuse, asserting that it was an oversight, and promised that, if the bride was sent to his wigwam, he would make good the deficiency on the morrow.

But Don't Know How was not to be fooled by such subterfuges. He insisted upon the literal fulfilment of the contract; and when the brave began to bargain afresh, declaring that he had but one powder-horn, which he could not spare, the chief returned the accepted goods, and gave him twenty-four hours in which to meet his obligations, or to take the consequences.

The heat had grown sultrier and more oppressive during the afternoon, and a fantastic play of heat-lightning was fitfully illuminating the western horizon. The sun had set in a sanguinary blaze of colours; the clouds sent long phantasmal arms towards the zenith, and the first premonitory mutterings of thunder were heard on the outskirts of the wide plain.

Gradually, as the dark curtain spread northward, southward, westward, a desolating wind began to wander over the prairie, making all sorts of aimless excursions, marked by the bending of the sage-brush and the faint whistling of the arid stalks. A few hesitating drops of rain fell, big and heavy; and in a trice the heavens were blotted out in a mighty downpour, which swept with a splendid impetuosity across the sun-parched plain.

Zee-Wee was sitting, with her ear pressed against the wall of the wigwam, listening to the rhythmic roar of the storm and the wild rhetoric of the thunder. With one eye she was also observing Wehakha, who was squatting before the fire, shelling corn, while with the other she was keeping watch of the door, through the crack of which the rain was beating in, forming a large, slowly widening puddle.

Though this puddle seemed for the moment a matter of much interest to Zee-Wee, it was merely her external sense which was occupied in its contemplation. Out of her soul there arose an anxious query, which was repeated and repeated with a quivering intensity, until it became half mechanical, and she had to rouse herself again in order to realise that happiness or misery—life and death—depended upon it. She had spent the whole afternoon in tremulous excitement, asking herself with

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a wearisome reiteration: "Will he come? Will he give up the powder-horn?"

It was too ludicrously absurd, and yet tragically humiliating, that her fate, in this moment, depended upon a powder-horn.

It was three hours after sunset. The chief and his sons were snoring peacefully in their corners, and, beside Zee-Wee, only Wehakha and Wauska were awake. The fire in the middle of the wigwam was flaring up fitfully, only to lapse again into a slumberous flapping about the glowing coals. The raindrops which fell through the open smoke-hole sizzled in the smouldering embers, and the smoke writhed tortuously along the floor.

Then all of a sudden there was a shriek—a loud, wild, frenzied shriek. Something dashed down the smoke-hole—a fierce, phantasmal something—whirling live coals and cinders in a maddening dance through the air; then all was still. The fire was out. Darkness and confusion filled the wigwam. It took a long while before a light could be struck, and, when the fire once more blazed up, the chief discovered that Zee-Wee was gone. Wrapping a blanket about him, he was about to plunge out into the night, but bumped in the doorway against Crooked Gun, who stood, dripping wet from top to toe, triumphantly lifting above his head a powder-horn.

Without a word, Don't Know How pushed past him and ran towards the end of the village, where the horses were grazing. Wehakha roused her sons and bade them join in the search; and Wauska, smothering a shout of joy, slipped out of the door and was swallowed up in the abysmal gloom.

She ran a few steps, and then flung herself flat on the ground. She could hear the frightened trampling of the horses, and concluded that her father and Crooked Gun were having trouble in capturing their ponies, for it was not the rhythmic gallop of one or two animals, but the continuous trooping hither and thither of a panic-stricken herd.

Zee-Wee was sitting, with her ear pressed against the wall of the wigwam.

Cautiously she raised her head again and called: "Zee-Wee!" She knew her sister could not be far away, and she knew, too, that unless she could find her and show her the way to the agency she would surely be captured. Wauska crawled along for some minutes on hands and feet, feeling the soil with her fingers, and finally found the path. A momentary flash on the horizon revealed to her, under a clump of sage-brush, a crouching form, which moved and half rose up, only to cower again in helpless terror.

"Zee-Wee," she cried, flinging herself down upon the prostrate form, "Zee-Wee!"

"Wauska," screamed Zee-Wee, clutching her in a smothering embrace. "You will not betray me?"

"No. Wauska help Zee-Wee."

And, lifting her up by main force, she started forward again, trusting to an instinct in her feet rather than to intelligence. "Zee-Wee, hurry," she whispered, breathlessly. "Don't Know How hunt Zee-Wee."

She paused to listen for the sound of hoof-beats; but, hearing none, she broke again into a swift, impetuous flight, which took small note of obstacles. The arm which was wound about Zee-Wee's waist was scratched and bleeding, and often her bare feet slid over toads and vermin which the rain had lured out from their holes. There was something in this rapid, sure, silent run which, instead of exhausting Zee-Wee, by reviving her courage restored her vigour.

She was about to open her mouth to speak, when suddenly she heard voices behind her, and the hoof-beats of horses. But before a sound escaped her lips the heavens were rent from zenith to horizon by one fierce, straight, terrifying blast of flame, followed in the same instant by an ear-splitting crash—dead, flat, stupefying.

Wauska had dropped to the ground like a stone, pulling her sister with her. For two or three minutes she lay tremulously still, while the aerial artillery overhead discharged a series of deafening salvoes. Suddenly Wauska, who had been cautiously groping with her fingers, exclaimed: "Me help Zee-Wee. Wauska hide Zee-Wee quick."

And, giving her an admonitory nudge, she crawled eagerly forward in the dark intervals between the flashes of lightning, dropping quickly upon the ground at the first hint of an illumination. It was a hazardous experiment, and not always successful; but she had reason to hope that they were yet undetected, when, at the end of five minutes' laborious progress, they tumbled into a deep hollow. It was an excavation recently made by a party of emigrants that had crossed the plains, when a season of bad weather had prevented their travelling. It was more than half full of water, but up under the edge of the projecting turf there was a dry and comparatively sheltered nook, into which the two girls shiveringly wedged themselves.

Through the perpetual rumble of the thunder they could distinctly hear the shouts of men and the galloping hither and thither of horses. They recognised plainly their father's voice, and that of Crooked Gun calling to him from the distance. They seemed all to have taken different directions, beating systematically over the prairie, so that no inch of ground should escape them.

Zee-Wee held her breath; she heard her heart hammering in her throat. She was by turns burning hot and shivering. Nearer and nearer came the hoof-beats; a horse whinnied frantically; another answered far away in the gloom.

Suddenly Wauska became aware of two figures on horseback at the edge of the pool; it was her father and Zee-Wee's discarded wooer. Swiftly she withdrew her head, and, clutching Zee-Wee in her arms, shut her

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eyes tightly. She could hear the turbulent heart beat within the breast that was pressed against her own, and almost the surging of the hot blood as it sped through the veins with the impetus of fright.

Zee-Wee knew by Wauska's abrupt movement, and by the tightening of her clutch, that they were on the verge of being discovered. She heard the sound of voices, but could comprehend nothing. An icy chill of terror rippled down her spine; a sound of rushing water filled her ears. She expected every moment to feel a rude grip on her arm—nay, she felt it again and again, and shuddered.

It seemed an infinitely long time she lay thus. The sound of hoof-beats which dimly penetrated her sense receded farther and farther. Then she felt a chill stream of water steal down her back, and she had a sensation that her hair was full of earth.

"Are they gone, Wauska?" she whispered.

"Zee-Wee, wait!"

It must have been fully half an hour before she dared repeat her query. Then Wauska cautiously descended into the pool, the water of which reached to her hips, and, creeping up to the edge, endeavoured to take a survey of the prairie. But it was now pitch dark, except for an occasional faint flash of lightning on the western sky-line.

"Zee-Wee, come," she said, and, grasping her sister's hand, she pulled her up the steep bank.

"Why did they go away?" asked Zee-Wee, when the fresh air restored her respiration.

"Crooked Gun, he say 'Water.'"

"They didn't think we could be there, because the excavation was full of water."

As Wauska made no objection to this theory, Zee-Wee concluded that it must be correct.

They had walked perhaps two hours, groping their way over the trail; dropping flat upon the ground whenever their agitated vision conjured a horseman out of the gloom; hearing the dismal howls of the coyote, singly and in chorus; struggling with the pestiferous sage-brush which threatened to put out their eyes whenever they strayed from the path. But it was yet long before dawn, and Wauska, who had often heard of Indians being shot by sentries, did not dare approach the agency until morning.

Being weary unto death, they lay down at the roadside, watching the eastern horizon for the first flicker of the light. The rain had now ceased, and a chill night wind was careering over the prairie. In their wet clothes they shivered until their teeth chattered. Zee-Wee was numb all over, and the black insects that swarmed in the grass filled her with disgust. Another hour and another they waited. Then the east brightened into a translucent grey, which became faintly flushed with pink and green and saffron. The Government post (which was a dismounted fort) lay before them, with its large barn-like barracks inclosed within a tall adobe wall.

Wauska warily scanned the plain before she rose from her recumbent position. The chances were ten to one that their father, anticipating their intention, would attempt to intercept them before reaching the agency. While she was cautiously lifting her head, her large deerlike eyes suddenly dilated. She saw in the grey twilight two horses grazing scarcely a mile away. It was better to trust to the mercy of the sentries than to that of the Indians. Beckoning to Zee-Wee to follow her, she began to creep on hands and feet towards the gate. But scarcely fifty rods had they advanced when a wild yell rent the air, and the air seemed to throb with a vague, rhythmical thud.

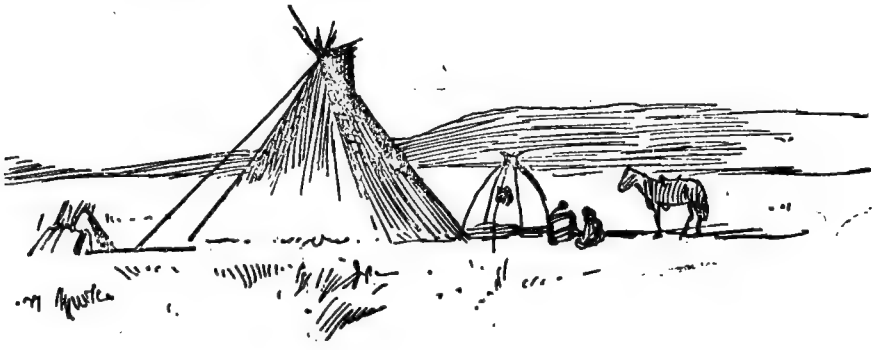
"Run, Zee-Wee, run!" cried Wauska, grabbing her sister's arm as she rose, and dashing forward in the direction of the gate. Faster they ran, and faster; the stronger sister's right arm wound about the weaker one's waist.

Nearer the hoof-beats came, nearer and nearer. Zee-Wee felt her knees tottering, and strange noises rang in her ears. But yet her feet moved with a wild, nightmarish speed; and it seemed as if, in spite of weakness and fright, they must keep on thus—running, running—faster and faster—for ever. Now she swayed, and was on the point of falling, but something upheld her; her breath stuck in her throat, and all things seemed blurred to her sight.

Wauska screamed aloud—screamed madly, frantically—to someone who appeared to be moving on the top of the wall; but behind her came a wilder scream—a terrible, blood-curdling yell—which made her heart stand still. The hoof-beats were now close behind her, or in front of her—all round her. But, just as they seemed about to trample her down, a great black something swung open, and she fell in a heap, with Wauska on the top of her, within the gate of the United States agency.

There was a great commotion about her; strange and familiar voices commingled, now very near, now far away. She was carried by strong men, and, when she opened her eyes, she lay upon a beautiful white bed. Someone was sitting at her side, gazing at her with affectionate solicitude. Her heart gave a bound of joy as she recognised Marion Gallaudet, and she flung herself weeping into her arms.

H. H. Boyesen.



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An Incident of '71.

THE carriage was going at a terrific pace. The horses, unusually excited, dashed through the air, which whistled past their ears. Their hoofs resounded loudly on the hard, frozen road. The two carriage lanterns shone in the night like the glowing eyes of some huge, prehistoric monster.

The mad, furious course in the darkness had something strange about it; something mysterious, sinister, and all the more so, perhaps, that it was taking place in the terrible year when the Germans were in Alsace.

The carriage, like a vessel in distress on a raging sea, oscillated from left to right and from right to left.

When the vehicle, which had been flying down the slopes of Ottrot, raced through the village, passing like an express train the houses with their little low roofs, on which the moon cast a silvery light, the good women, suddenly frightened, made the sign of the cross with a trembling of the knees and a whispered prayer.

The fact was, the Prussians, for several weeks past, had been cruelly ravaging the country.

The flying carriage contained some German officers, who were the bearers of secret orders to S——.

"Faster, faster," they cried, whipping up the poor horses, which were already breathing fire and smoke out of their nostrils. The wretched driver, terrified, obeyed mechanically.

"*Tonnerre!*" he growled, "my horses will die when they reach their stable, if they do not break their necks going round one of these steep curves." But the strokes of the whip redoubled, and the dizzy course became still more reckless.

* * * * * *

That afternoon the enemy had taken possession of the village of Ottrot, and, as their custom was, had installed themselves in the people's homes.

Four officers were domiciled with the Mayor. They sat there in the middle of his best drawing-room, talking loudly, and smoking their long pipes of porcelain, while they dried their boots at the hot fire blazing in the grate.

Their unwilling host, a tall old man, with a white beard, served them with drinks as graciously as he could. His eye passed sadly from one to the other, his venerable head shaking melancholy, as if to say: "It is the right of the strongest; what can one do against a hundred?"

Perhaps his mind was dwelling on the past. Perhaps he was looking forward to revenge—thinking, it may be, of the time when his countrymen would be victorious, and offering mercy to these very officers, his guests.

He was recalled to the present by a gentle knock at the door, and almost immediately afterwards, he saw in the porch the tall powerful frame of Lux, who was the foreman of the Mayor's servants, and a model Hercules. He was agile as a deer and as strong as an ox, and could break a coin between his fingers quite as easily as he would break an egg shell.

The neck of a bull rose out of the flannel shirt carelessly fastened across the throat by a cotton necktie. He was a man terrible in anger, but in repose, gentle as a lamb, and as docile.

"What is the matter?"

"There is this the matter: another officer wants to quarter himself upon us here. Shall I strangle him?"

These words coming from such lips made one shudder.

"No, my old Lux, keep calm, that would do no good, and would only bring worse upon us. Let him in; he probably wishes to speak with his colleagues."

Lux did as his master told him, much against his inclination. It would have given him such a huge amount of pleasure to twist one of those German necks with his great sinewy fingers.

The new arrival burst into the drawing-room. The four Prussian officers uttered cries of surprise.

They rose at once in a body, and saluted with great respect the stranger who had come to disturb their peace.

"Be seated, and let us talk," said the new arrival, in German, and in a voice of command.

"You will set out at once," he said, "and take this sealed message to the Prince of X——, at S——," and he drew out of the pocket of his long military cloak, white with snow, a large white envelope, and handed it to one of the officers.

"Go, all four of you, and place yourselves at the disposition of the Prince. Further orders will be given to each of you later. You must get horses and carriage and start at once. Is it understood? Then hasten!"

Then, turning to the host, he said in French:

"Please accommodate these gentlemen with a carriage and two fresh horses. General's orders!"

Lux, who had remained standing at the door during this scene, anticipated his master's reply.

"It is well, Monsieur l'officier; you shall be accommodated as you desire."

He spoke in a peculiar tone of voice. Only his master, however, noticed it.

A mad thought had been born in his brain, something superhuman, preposterous. Anyone who could have read it in his mind would have been shocked, terror-stricken.

While a farm hand harnessed the horses to the carriage, Lux put a saddle on Barka, an Arab horse.

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faithful animal which he loved and cared for himself with his own hands.

He spoke to it as he spoke to a friend, and the noble creature seemed to understand. When Lux mounted into the saddle he was trembling with joy.

A mysterious dialogue seemed to commence between the man and the horse, which, suddenly sending the sparks flying from beneath its four feet, vanished into the darkness like a phantom.

Barka, like some great mythological creature with wings, devoured space. His fine, nervous legs hardly seemed to touch the earth, and Lux kept him going at his utmost speed.

At length they stopped. Barka was white with foam, and Lux covered him with his cloak. He did not feel the cold, for the awful thought in his mind kept his whole body warm and tingling.

"It is yonder," he said to himself in a deep-voiced growl. "It is there that they are to perish."

At this point the road made a sudden turn, and apparently came to an abrupt end. As a matter of fact, however, it did not terminate, but continued in a steep, terrible slope. On the right was a dark mysterious wood, and on the left a deep and dizzy precipice such as are often seen by mountain roads.

Children were afraid to pass it by. The Gulf of Death, as it was called, had its legend. The old folk said that it was within its gloomy depths the monsters lived that ravaged the country at night.

"If my calculations are correct," said Lux in a low voice, "they will be here in ten minutes."

He tied Barka to a tree stem on the border of the wood, and a strange smile passed over his lips.

An extraordinary scene might then have been witnessed. Lux knelt down in this solitary, haunted spot, in the night time, and turned his face to heaven. It looked like a sinner asking forgiveness for his sins, rather than one planning an awful deed for the satisfaction of his rage and hate.

Not a sound was to be heard in the surrounding country. All seemed dead or asleep. Only a murmur of the wind in the pines.

Lux placed his ear to the ground, as the Indians do in the wilderness, and hearing a faint sound of hoofs in the distance, striking the hard ground, he raised his head. His face was transfigured!

"At last I shall have my revenge," he hissed.

Then he crouched down on his hands and knees and waited.

A few seconds more, and the carriage with the four German officers would be upon him.

He uttered a terrible cry of "*Vive la France!*" to which Barka replied with a joyful neigh.

The carriage, which had been approaching at tremendous speed, came to a sudden stop, as if arrested by an irresistible force, and remained there standing.

Lux had not moved an inch. He was not a man, but a stone wall.

He made a last and supreme effort, and raised himself upon his legs. Then with a terrific heave, he pushed over the dizzy brink, horses, carriage, and men.

An awful noise rose on the still night air. A sound of crashing, and of men and horses screaming. Then there was a silence, heavy, complete, tragic!

The man rose and peered over the edge into the black gulf of death. He saw nothing. Then he sprang into his saddle, and disappeared like a shadow into the night.

LE VIER.

The Love of His Life.

THE light crept dimly into the house. Romano's big eyes were bloodshot as he paced his room restlessly, beating his brow with his hands.

He paused, drew the blind aside, and peeped out at the glaring day. Venice bathed in sunshine looked black to Pietro Romano.

His gaze rested a moment on the church of S. Maria della Salute, erected to commemorate the passing away of the plague, then turned towards a golden ball, the vane of the Custom House, with a gilded figure of Fortune standing gracefully upon it. But even as he looked Fortune faded, flooded into fog by Pietro's tears. Faintly he discerned, as through a mist, the canal losing itself in a small arm of the sea. The blind fell back, and Romano was once again alone in the abode of death.

But two men below had noticed the bloodshot eyes peering round the blind.

"What is the matter with Pietro Romano?" asked one.

"He has lost his sweetheart-wife," replied the other.

They passed on.

Pietro went below. The air was heavy with the scent of flowers. He looked at the floral offerings of friends disdainfully.

"May they not be taken up?" asked a timid voice.

Pietro turned angrily to the servant. "No flowers shall lie on her coffin but mine."

Then he remembered that his wife's mother arrived from Paris that morning to look for the last time on Juliette.

Pietro hastened upstairs.

She had left a shower of lilies, a cross, and three wreaths on his wife's bed. The wreaths were from her three sisters. He seized the flowers in a frenzy, flung them away and trampled them under foot.

"Only mine," he muttered fiercely, "every blossom in Venezia, but from me, from me!"

Pietro returned to the foot of the bed, having drawn back the covering from the dead face, and feasted his eyes on the wondrous beauty of Juliette's marble features. How suddenly the end had come! Three

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days ago she walked with him on the Piazza San Marco. He could hear even then, in the presence of that still, stiff effigy, the murmuring of voices, and the music of the bands borne over the waters. For two days he had neither slept nor eaten. On the third his wife was dead.

He dropped his head in his hand. Sleep crept over him. He dreamt that he descended into the dark prisons of the condemned. Juliette was alive and well, lounging in a gondola, hung with coloured lanterns, listening to Venetian and Neapolitan songs, while he had been shut away in a fearfully narrow den, far from the sunshine, life, and brightness of Venice.

He fancied he was taken over the Bridge of Sighs, dragged below to the dungeons, and strangled. Then his body was put on a gondola, carried out, and cast into the sea. Pietro woke in a cold perspiration to face his dead wife. *She* was the one to go; he must be left! Steps outside startled him. Men had come to measure.

Ah! What sacrilege! Strangers entering the sacred presence of eternal sleep? Pietro rushed to the door, and faced them haughtily.

"I will do your work!" he said. They exchanged a looked that seemed to say: "The Signor is mad—his grief has turned his brain."

But Pietro Romano seized the tape, and closed the door.

With trembling fingers he measured the slim figure of his girl-wife.

"Plenty of room," he muttered to himself—"room for the six large crosses I shall lay at your side. Your arms shall be outstretched, as when you basked in the sunshine on your couch. Plenty of room for my angel! —my life!"

"So large?" said the men, when Pietro returned.

"Yes, and beautiful as large! The plate without must be solid gold—the handles, too. No funeral in all Europe should be more magnificent than that of the fair Juliette Romano!"

They went their way, and Pietro returned to his silent watch by the cold figure.

Presently a voice whispered low without. The door opened softly; Juliette's mother crept in.

"I said I would not see you," cried Pietro, crouching to the ground. "Go—leave me alone with my wife!"

She took no heed of his wild words.

"Why do we live—you and I?" he muttered. "What good are we without Juliette?"

The mother's tears fell like rain. She looked pityingly at the haggard, despairing man.

"You are ill, Pietro," she said gently; "let me watch by her awhile. Go and eat and sleep."

"I will taste nothing till she is laid in the ground. She goes with you to the home of her childhood; she will rest for ever in Père la Chaise."

"You will faint by the way," replied Juliette's mother, taking up her position near the bed.

He grew so uneasy at her presence that at last she was obliged to leave.

"Poor Pietro!" she sighed, in the midst of her own grief; "he is more mad than ever in this hour of bitterest trial."

The great, handsome coffin came at last, with the golden plate, on which was inscribed:

"Juliette,
"Love of my Life.
"Buried in the Heart of Pietro Romano."

"They must not see her," he said, "those coarse, rough men."

So he drew the white curtains about the bed, as they brought the coffin in. "To-night," he told them, "I will place her myself in her last bed, and close the coffin lid. Come early in the morning and screw it down. The vulgar gaze shall never rest on dead Juliette."

Before moving the body, Pietro bade her mother say farewell to the calm, sweet face.

"Why did she shudder when kissing those icy lips?" he wondered. "Juliette was beautiful in death as in life. There was nothing to fear."

Then he sent her away.

An hour later Juliette lay in her magnificent coffin. The lid was closed. The following morning they had screwed it down, and Juliette was taken to the home of her fathers.

Strangely enough, though all arrangements had been previously made by Pietro, after his final farewell of the body, he mysteriously vanished.

The funeral party were obliged to leave without him, active search in the meanwhile being made.

"I believe the poor Signor is mad," declared Juliette's mother. "He has rushed away to hide himself. But the dead cannot wait. We must go."

So they laid the beautiful Juliette in Père la Chaise, and her husband was seen no more.

Whence had he fled—that wild, impassioned man, distracted by grief?

None could tell, and his wife's mourners waited in vain by the grave to see if he would come.

Some weeks later a letter reached the mother in Pietro's familiar hand.

She tore it open eagerly. The words paralysed her.

"Death was by poison. Do not seek for me—you can never find Pietro Romano."

The message, which came from America, fell like a thunderbolt upon Juliette's family. The idea that he had poisoned her seemed incredible, but they were determined to prove if this were truth, or merely the ravings of a maniac.

Permission was obtained to exhume poor Juliette.

As the massive lid opened a gasp of wondering horror escaped the witnesses. Two bodies locked in each other's arms met their astonished gaze. One the fair form of Juliette disfigured by decay, the other the crumbling remains of Pietro Romano. Clutched in his hand were the following words:

"I sleep with my Juliette—good-night! To bed for the last time. Our lips meet—we are one in death as in life. I have posted a letter which will be forwarded from America to Paris by a friend. Poison indeed lies buried with Juliette, but in the body of her devoted husband."

Winifred Graham.

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AN OLD FOOL.

WHEN Colonel Starforth married Vera Harrington people said that he was an old fool, and, truth to tell, he had some misgivings upon the subject himself. John Starforth was sixty; vigorous, indeed, and erect of figure; kindly, chivalrous, and handsome still, in spite of his white hairs, but still sixty. And Vera was only twenty-two.

Of course he had money, and equally, of course, she had none. They had met just after the Colonel's return from India, and he, an old bachelor, whose only love had been his profession, fell and worshipped like a boy of eighteen. Vera liked him well enough. He was kind and gentle, and, above all, rich, and her life had been dull and void of those good things which make life's happiness. For it is only when we have them that riches are not everything.

And so they were married, and, in a way, were happy. The Colonel did not expect too much; it was enough that he might call this sweet flower his own, enough that his wife did not shrink from his caresses, half timid but wholly adoring. And Vera could not but feel affection for the man who lavished upon her all that his wealth could obtain, could not but be happy in the luxury that surrounded her. It was all so strange and beautiful—for a time.

For riches are only everything when we have them not.

The inevitable happened at last. Vera tired of her husband and fell in love with a young man. Perhaps she fell in love with a young man and tired of her husband.

Age was evidently beginning to tell upon the Colonel. He was quieter than of yore, and the grey hair had taken a whiter tinge. He did not rest well, and at length continued sleeplessness made him weak and ill—weak enough to endanger a man of his age. He bore up bravely, like the gallant old soldier that he was, but he had to confess himself vanquished in the end.

Vera nursed him devotedly. There is a latent instinct that makes every woman a tender nurse: a sweet sense of motherhood that brims with kindness for any helpless object. So, woman-like, she tended him with unselfish devotion and gentle, loving kindness.

One day she looked idly at the prescription the doctor had left. Chloral hydrate, chloral hydrate? Why, she had some of that upstairs. Chloral hydrate!

And then some horrible fiend came into her heart, driving out the tenderness, the loving kindness, the very woman in her. She might be so happy, but for the old man lying there half-helpless in his bed. What right had he to spoil her young life and all the happiness that might come to her?

It was time for his sleeping draught, but Colonel Starforth slept when his wife entered the room, noiselessly as a practised nurse. The old man looked so wan and haggard that Vera half-stooped to kiss him, then started back hastily, and poured something into the glass she held. She looked at her husband again, and her hands shook a little as she drew another little bottle from her pocket and added its contents to the measure in the glass.

Suddenly she rushed from the room, and then stopped trembling. The sick man had moved. What if he had seen her? Her limbs gave way beneath her; the blood lashed and throbbed in her ears. Then she recovered a little; the beating in her ears died away like the distant thud of a horse's hoofs. She rose up, still weak, but firm and unflinching once more. She had left that bottle upon the table, and she must fetch it away.

At the threshold she lingered and peered into the room. All was well, after all. The Colonel lay there quietly, and she went in and secured the incriminating bottle. As she stood there the Colonel opened his eyes.

"Is that you, my dear?" he asked gently.

"Yes, I—I came to give you your sleeping draught."

"Thank you, Vera." He raised himself painfully and took the glass from her, clasping her hand as he did so.

"My child," he said, "have I made it very hard for you?"

"I—I do not understand."

"Yes you do, Vera, and I would willingly take this from you if I thought it would help your happiness. But you would be sorry afterwards—and I would not have you sorry. Stay, my child, I know everything; your love for young Fordyce. And, Vera, I saw you measure out this draught. Shall I drink it now?"

"Oh, no, no! Only forgive me."

"My dear, I have little to forgive. I should not have brought the cloud of my old age across the sunshine of your youth. But I won't trouble you long—and Hawks has my will. Everything is yours, child, of course; I have made you pay hardly enough for it."

"Why, my little girl—there, there, you must not cry. Kiss me and run away; I would rather be alone for a little while."

Vera's tears rained hot salt into his eyes as she kissed him, and when she was alone there came upon her a loathing of self that was more bitter than any grief. How vile a thing had she been! And he, how noble and how kind!

Fordyce! Surely she had not done this thing for Fordyce? Why, she hated him. It had all been some horrid madness which was gone now, never to return. For she loved her husband now—the fire of those few moments had burned away all save the purity from her heart. Dear husband, how happy they would be, he in her love and she in her atonement and his love as well. How happy they would be, how happy!

Upstairs her husband lay as she had left him. Some time he lay, till presently something hot trickled down a little furrow that had come but lately in his bronzed cheek, and a stifled sob broke from him. A little longer he lay, and then, still sobbing, staggered weakly from the bed and took up the glass his wife had left upon the table.

E. C. WAGGENER.

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The Lottery Ticket.

Celia Bonner, coming over the hill from Gatesborough to West Gatesborough in the teeth of a keen November storm, wondered why this particular storm affected her so disagreeably. Generally in such weather she beguiled the way with cheerful thoughts and calculations, all overspread by calm complacency that she had at last gained this position as teacher, so long coveted; but to-night she found herself wishing that the school were at West Gatesborough instead of at Gatesborough, or else that her mother and the small house and farm which was their sole estate could be moved nearer to the school.

This wishing was all so unlike Celia's matter-of-fact nature in general that she sought hard for the reason why she should be taken with such a desire. She soon found it in the fact that she was undeniably hungry.

She was wet, cold, and bedraggled, but most of all she was hungry, with the keen, uncompromising hunger of healthy young girlhood. Surely this of itself was enough to induce gloomy thoughts and futile wishes.

"I was silly not to think of it sooner," she half-laughed to herself. "I had begun to forget that I had a very small lunch this noon. But never mind, mother will have a hot supper waiting for me."

Then she turned the last bend in the road, and seeing the light in her mother's kitchen, stumbled along more quickly than ever. A feeble light it was, and typical in a measure of everything within the house, from the mother down, except when Celia was there. Even the fires Mrs. Bonner kindled had a trick of burning weakly and uncertainly.

When, a few minutes after she saw the light, Celia burst into the kitchen, with her cloak and umbrella held out before her, the savoury supper she had so keenly anticipated was in no way apparent to her senses. The table was provided with no other edibles than hard biscuits, a very few slices of cold corned beef, and half a Dutch cheese.

Heedless now of the drip which bespattered the carpet, Celia stood still.

"Mother, you don't mean to say this is all you have for supper?" Affecting intense preoccupation with the tea-kettle, her mother responded:

"I don't see but it's pretty good, Celia."

"But, mother, we've had nothing for the last week, and I told you I was starving for something hearty and warm. I gave you money this morning to buy a steak."

"Well, you see there's so many other things to get," Mrs. Bonner pleaded weakly. There was something so furtive and insincere in her manner that Celia, without difficulty, jumped to a conclusion.

"Mother, I believe you've spent that money for another foreign lottery ticket."

This abrupt statement revealed the skeleton which had stood in the closet of this poor little household for more than a year. It was a subject so repulsive to Celia that she hated to speak of it, but so dear to the mother that she loved to enlarge upon it.

"And supposing I did, Celia?" she said, more confidently. "Fortune's going to turn sometime, and I'll be bound you'll be glad enough if we come into fifteen hundred pounds all at once, as that young man did up in Manchester."

The lines of the argument were all wearily familiar to Celia, but hunger gave an added vigour to her protest.

"I might be demoralised by it," she said, "but I'd never be glad. Whether you gain or lose, the principle is the same. It's nothing but gambling, and though you'd feel pretty badly to hear that our Joe in London had become a gambler, you think it no harm to be one yourself."

Mrs. Bonner remained silent a little while, and then began to cry softly.

"It's too bad for you to scold in that way, Celia," she said, "when all I'm thinking of is your good and Joe's. I don't see that I'm committing any sin."

"You've never been the same, mother, since you bought that first ticket two years ago. It's like drinking; you want to keep on at it. I don't mean to be unkind; but I can't make it seem anything less than wicked."

The stern young preacher softened a little here, and a plaintive sniffle, by way of acknowledgment, prefaced Mrs. Bonner's reply:

"I don't believe I'll ever need to go into them again, Celia. I feel it that I'm going to get something this time. I had a dream last night, and in it I was counting out fifteen bags of gold!"

It was useless to argue further. Celia moodily set about clearing away the dishes, and said no more.

A few weeks later, coming over the hill in a snow-storm, Celia found the little light absent from her mother's window. Filled at once with a vague alarm, she hurried over the remaining part of the road and into the house, calling as she went: "Mother! Where are you, mother?"

No answering voice greeted her, but groping to the mantel, she lighted a lamp. Then turning to examine the room, she saw her mother sitting in her accustomed chair by the window.

"Why?" Celia began, half-relieved, half-provoked, and then the question which was to follow died on her lips, for it became apparent that, though death did not yet confront her, she was looking upon its strange similitude—paralysis.

Her mother's whole body was rigid and motionless. The poor hands, quieted for ever, hung down beside it. The tongue, whose irrelevancy had often wearied poor practical Celia, was now for ever still.

For what seemed an hour, though in reality it was hardly more than a moment, Celia stood almost as motionless; then, running down the road to their nearest neighbour, she brought her back, pitying and exclaiming as she came.

Together they lifted the limp figure to the lounge, upon which they wheeled Mrs. Bonner to the bed in the

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room off the sitting-room. Only when they laid her there did Celia, bending over her in agonised appeal, discover that the eyes alone were instinct with life. They looked up to Celia with pitiful intelligence, seeming to respond to her cry. Then wandering through the door in their gaze, they fixed themselves on Mrs. Denny with a total change of expression.

Celia turned round in startled surprise, to discover that the kindly neighbour, with the instinct of a housekeeper, was "tidying up" the sitting-room, and, as part of the effort, was now examining an envelope. Celia remembered that she had seen this lying on the floor beside her mother's chair, but she had been too sadly lacking in curiosity to examine it.

"What is it, Mrs. Denny?" she now asked. Then she covered her face with her hands, as Mrs. Denny replied:

"For mercy's sake! The poor thing! If it isn't one of those foreign lottery lists! Now, that's what's given her this stroke, I suppose. She's been disappointed again, and she set so much store by it. Shall I burn it, Celia?"

"Yes," Celia answered, with sorrowful energy, and then corrected herself as the haunting eyes on the pillow caught hers with a sudden fierce protest.

"No, Mrs. Denny. She doesn't want it burnt, I think. Put it in the top left-hand drawer, please."

Soon after, and all through the days which intervened before the end came, that mournful gaze concentrated itself most of all on the old family Bible which rested on a stand in the corner of the room where she lay, and this, too, Celia interpreted.

"She wants me to read the Bible to her. Oh, poor mother, you know now, don't you, that your truest riches are in that?"

So hour after hour during the few short weeks in which her mother lingered on, the daughter read and re-read the promises which relate to eternal life. Sometimes peace fell like a veil upon the dim windows of that fast-darkening tabernacle, and again such restless entreaty looked out from them that Mrs. Denny interrupted the reading.

"Celia, she's got something on her mind that we don't know of yet. It seems sometimes as though her eyes would pierce through that Bible as you sit there reading, and when you ain't at it, she's still staring at it."

But always Celia's reply was the same:

"It's only that she's growing more eager for it all the time. It seems the greatest comfort I have that she loves it so. Yes, mother, I'll read more!"

The final summons came very quietly at last. Celia, going away for a much-needed nap, had smiled down upon her, saying:

"Good-bye, mother! I'm going to lie down just for a little while. God bless you, mother dear!"

The poor, pathetic eyes had seemed almost to smile in return, but when Celia awoke from her nap they were closed in their last long slumber. Whatever was the secret they had yearned to disclose, all opportunity was now for ever gone by.

Two days later they laid Mrs. Bonner in the old churchyard, and Celia returned to her teaching, with a new tombstone as the immediate object of her ambition. The blinds were closed in the old house, and the doors locked up, and for the present Celia boarded at Gatesborough.

The weeks wore on until the winter term was nearly over. Then Celia's brother Joe wrote from London, begging her to join him there. He was well, and was lonely. Why should not Celia let or sell the old place, and come to keep house for him. He was getting on well, and could make her comfortable.

The little house under the hill could never be the same to her again. Whether there or in Gatesborough, her living was but scanty at best, and most of all she longed to be with dear old Joe. Almost as soon as the wish was expressed, a tenant was found for the house, whereupon Celia with Mrs. Denny's help began the task of clearing away and putting things in order. Mrs. Denny offered to take care of any such relics as Celia chose to keep.

"If I have room in my trunk," Celia said, "I shall certainly take the old Bible. I can't bear to leave that behind."

Then, being alone and somewhat tired, she began to turn over the pages of the sacred book, stopping to read here and there. She opened, all unaware, at two pages where she was not accustomed to read; and there, between them, lay a lottery ticket bearing the number—68,498.

Celia looked down upon it for a moment with the half-fascinated and yet wholly disgusted gaze which she might have bestowed upon an intruding snake. Then suddenly a thought which she found almost equally venomous darted into her mind.

"Was this the reason mother used to look so longingly at the Bible?" she thought. "Oh! surely not."

Then, leaving the book open on the stand, she rushed in a tumult of fear and apprehension to the other side of the room, and opened the top left-hand drawer.

There, where Mrs. Denny had placed it, still lay the well-remembered fatal envelope. Opening it Celia scanned the list of numbers which had won the principal prizes at the December drawing—32,413, 59,162, 44,122, 58,227; and then, dancing before her eyes, 68,498.

The poor futile dream had come true. The fifteen hundred pounds, represented by the fifteen bags of gold, had for one moment flashed before the dreamer's eyes; and then, before her feet could carry her from one room into the next, before her eager hand could grasp the small blue slip, the hand of death had arrested her.

Just in the first painful shock of her discovery, Celia wondered if her conscience could stand the strain. It seemed as if Fate, not Providence, had been at work, and had wrought this bitter piece of irony.

For a long hour she groped amid darkened thoughts. Then she rose, and again, as on that fatal night, groped her way to the mantel. She lighted the lamp, and stood looking down into the smouldering logs upon the hearth. While she looked, a new thought came to trouble her, a new though a very feeble temptation assailed her.

"Your mother wanted it most of all for Joe and you," the tempter whispered. "She would have been happier dying if she thought you would have had it."

But, with some of the old fire in voice and eyes, Celia answered aloud, as though to a visible opponent:

"I will not do it! It was like one of those poisonous marsh damps which lure people on to death. It led her there; she would have been alive now if this weakness had not taken hold of her. And I would rather die than profit by it now. I will burn the thing, so that the temptation may not come to me again."

In another moment the small blue strip of paper curled and shrivelled over the dying logs, then burst into a mocking flame, and in a moment more was a thin little sheet of ashes.

N. N.

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THE - CHLORAL - EATER.

AT the club it had been known for years that he ate chloral. The characteristic ashen complexion, the dull, lifeless expression of his lustreless eyes, the parchment-like appearance of his harsh, dry skin, the tremor of his palsied hand, and his general lackadaisical and irresponsible actions pointed unquestionably to the chloral habit.

More than this, he didn't deny it, and nightly he consumed large quantities of the seductive drug. He would seek some remote corner of the club-room, and under the influence of this powerful narcotic, taken in liberal doses, pass the entire evening in a state of absolute stupor.

Smith, for that was his plebeian name, was only forty-five, but judging from his prematurely aged appearance he was quite sixty.

On this particularly stormy night in January, of which I write, it was after twelve o'clock, and one by one the members of the club had deserted their wine and billiards and disappeared, not without considerable hesitancy and imprecations on the turbulent weather, however, into the howling wind and blinding snow.

Smith sat dozing in his favourite corner; Dr. Dunbar and Captain Dickinson still lingered over a half-emptied bottle of Médoc.

"I say, Dunbar, he's a queer old duck over there in the corner. I wonder how he began it? He seems to be unusually saturated to-night. Let's pump him."

"Better let him alone," growled Dunbar, who was in a bad humour on account of his enforced stay at the club; "I wish this infernal storm would permit a man to go home without running the risk of being frozen to death. It seems to me it's about time to kick him out of the club. He's a nuisance, and shouldn't be allowed to come here with his wretched chloral."

At this juncture, Smith arose and staggered across the room to where the two men sat. He languidly sank into the remaining vacant chair at the table, and for a moment vaguely looked about him. Then fumbling in his pocket, he drew forth a half-emptied bottle, from which he poured out into the palm of his hand about a teaspoonful of the shining crystals, the whole of which he swallowed, with an unsteady tilt of the head, at one gulp.

The effect of the drug seemed to stimulate him to consciousness.

"Ten doses like that to-night," he said, "and I can scarcely feel it. I can't keep this up much longer, it's power is going. I'll cut my throat when this fails to affect me."

"What is it?" inquired Dickinson, by way of making conversation, although every man in the club knew Smith's habit.

"Chloral."

"Chloral?" repeated Dickinson.

"Yes."

"How long have you been eating it?"

"About fifteen years."

"Began like all the rest, I suppose, for medicinal purposes?"

Smith looked uneasily about the room. It was deserted, save by the three men seated round the table; a diabolical gleam shone from his glazed eyes.

"I took it to commit suicide," he slowly said, as he glanced in the direction of Dunbar.

"Suicide?" echoed Dickinson.

"Yes; but I didn't take enough, and the effect was so delightful, that I concluded life with chloral wasn't half bad after all. So, as long as the alluring influence of the delicious drug lasted, I decided to live; when it ceases to soothe me, I will carry into effect my solemn vow; then"—drawing his skinny hand across his throat, with a suggestive shrug of his shoulders—"I'll follow her—and him.

"He was a student when he met Lida. Let me see, that was in '75—yes, that's right. It was twenty years ago, Lida was only sixteen, and that infamous villain still lives.

"Poor girl," he continued, as a deep-red spot burnt into his sunken cheek. "*She* was more successful. Lida never woke, and the doctors, fools that they were, said it was heart failure. Yes, they said she died from mitral insufficiency, which the unsuspecting and credulous public accepted without questioning. Mitral insufficiency, indeed!" And he gave a weird, gruesome chuckle to himself, as he sarcastically repeated the learned diagnosis.

"We parted at twelve o'clock on Christmas Eve. The following morning found Lida dead! I alive, and oblivious to all sorrow and care. I revelled in a Utopia of bliss, in fields Elysian; my joy was unspeakable, my dream surpassingly felicitous. I longed to live on and on in this ecstatic state, with never a heartache or a pain, without the shadow of grief or affection. It was chloral! I had discovered the panacea of all human ills, the charm for every mortal misery, a boon and a blessing to heart-broken and suffering humanity. From that day I have never been without it."

It was apparent that the topic was distasteful to Dr. Dunbar, who insisted on talking of the latest club gossip instead; but Dickinson's curiosity was aroused, and Smith seemed to be in an unusually frank and talkative mood, so the subject was continued.

"Must have been an unhappy love affair?" Dickinson ventured to ask, by way of eliciting Smith's story, which promised unusual interest. Not heeding this last remark, Smith fixed his unsteady gaze on Dr. Dunbar as he continued:

"That was a long time ago, and he still lives. But I'll kill him yet—yes, I'll kill him, the scoundrel! He won't live long. I'll be the last of the three to die. I have shadowed him for years. I know him, the villain! I'll kill him yet!"

He seemed to be gloating over the imaginary tragedy, as he rubbed his shrunken hands together in ghoulish glee.

"He was a medical student when he won Lida's love, her confidence, and her trust, and put her through a mock marriage ceremony. When he graduated he left her. For weeks she waited in vain to hear from him. But no word came to her despairing soul. Still loath to

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believe he meant to forsake her, she wrote to the address he left, but the letter came back. No one by that name was there. The awful truth prostrated her, and the overstrained thread of life all but snapped. I met her two years afterwards. I was irresistibly attracted by her sad, sweet face and her gentle, resigned manner. I loved her as only a man in the possession of a clear conscience and the knowledge of an upright life can love. I asked her to be my wife, to share with me life's joys and sorrows, life's trials, triumphs, and tribulations; that with her the rugged path of existence would become smooth and joyous. She was sobbing violently.

"'No, no,' she cried, in the agony of despair, 'don't break my heart, don't ask me that.' Then she told me all. At first I refused to believe her, but I saw she was terribly in earnest. I saw the truth of her pathetic story indelibly written in her tear-stained face. I was too much stunned to answer. I was as one suddenly bereft of reason, and I left her. What occurred during the next two days I don't remember. It was in the middle of the night when I first realised that my life was wrecked, and I burst into a fit of uncontrollable weeping.

"After this I grew calmer. I saw her night after night, but it was no use. We could never be happy. She never heard of the wretch who had destroyed her life's happiness and mine. Existence became unbearable. On Christmas Eve we parted, pledged to end our miserable lives that night. The next morning they found her cold and lifeless. I had discovered the elixir of human happiness, and I determined to live—to live to avenge that dead girl's wrongs, to live for the satisfaction of sending that scoundrel's treacherous soul to the shades of oblivion.

"Not until I kill him will I die contented. I know him, I have found him, the beast, and I'll kill him. He yet lives, but not for long. Ha! ha! I know him, and have for years. Ha! ha! ha! the villain, I think he knows now who I am. This will do it, my charmer, my faithful; this will do it, my trusted avenger. Ha! ha! ha!" and laughing like a fiend he drew a revolver from his pocket and carelessly brought it down upon the top of the table. Dr. Dunbar, who was sitting opposite, drew back, and was about to rush from the room, but too late.

Whether from accident or intentionally, we never knew, but as the revolver struck the top of the table, it was discharged, the ball piercing Dr. Dunbar's heart. Smith, laughing like a demon, fled from the room and disappeared in the blinding storm. The next morning he was found half buried in snow, the empty chloral bottle by his side.

Sigel Roush.

THE QUEEN of NIGHT

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By HEADON HILL,
(Author of "Guilty Gold," "Zambra the Detective," "The Rajah's Second Wife," etc., etc.)

SUMMARY.

Gaston Vizard gives Sir Simon Crawshay an introduction to the agent of the vessel *Queen of Night*, in order that he may make special arrangements with regard to the trip of his wealthy ward, Miss Challenor. Dr. Zavertal calls on Vizard, and informs him that a new captain will be wanted before the next cruise.

The *Queen of Night*, under the guise of a popular pleasure boat, is used in reality by a set of unscrupulous adventurers for the purpose of doing away with objectionable relatives.

In Chapter I. Cyril Forrester receives his dismissal from the Flower Steamship Company for breaking the regulations while saving the life of Miss Aline Challenor. He applies for and obtains from Nathan and Co., of Fenchurch Street, the vacant command of the ocean yacht, *Queen of Night*.

Becoming engaged to Miss Challenor (who comes in for a quarter of a million on attaining her majority), he obtains an interview with Sir Simon Crawshay, who promptly refuses a consent to his engagement, and informs him that his ward will be out of his way for the next six weeks, as she is about to take a cruise on board the *Queen of Night!* On going on board he is introduced to Dr. Zavertal, among whose patients are Miss Challenor, the Earl of Darranmore (a boy of fourteen coming into £40,000 a year), and Desmond Olebar.

A stowaway is discovered who works as an assistant steward.

CHAPTER VIII.

The First Death.

The run across the Bay of Biscay was accomplished in fine weather, and on the morning of the fifth day out, when the passengers came on deck, Gibraltar was in sight right ahead. By the time breakfast was over we had threaded our way through the coal hulks, and the *Queen of Night* lay at anchor a quarter of a mile from the New Mole. In a twinkling she was surrounded by the usual medley of shore boats manned by the jabbering hucksters of water melons and grapes. Away on the Rock the bugles were sounding merrily for morning parade, and even from our anchorage the great grey mass with the straggling town at foot was seen to be as gay as a geranium bed with the blaze of British scarlet.

My instructions from the owners were to allow a clear twenty-four hours at this port, to enable the passengers to go ashore and explore it thoroughly. Numerous parties had already been formed for the purpose, and our boats were soon busily engaged in transporting sightseers to the landing place.

Among the first to start was a boatload personally conducted by Zavertal, comprising Lord Darranmore and his tutor, Mr. Orlebar being also with the party. The latter had been drinking heavily ever since he came on board, and I heard the Doctor trying to induce him to remain quietly on the ship under the pretext that the excitement of a day's outing would be injurious to him. But this representation only had the effect of increasing his determina-

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tion to go, and Zavertal yielded—somewhat too readily, I thought.

Aline and Mrs. Brinkworth had arranged to join a party which was going under the escort of General Waldo, and, at the last moment, finding that there was nothing to keep me on board, I decided to accompany them. On landing we strolled through the Main Gate and up the steep street to the post-office for letters and telegrams. Entering the building, we were met by the Doctor's party just leaving after making a similar call. His convoy were mostly busy with their correspondence, but Zavertal himself crammed a cablegram he was reading into his pocket and came up to me, looking worried and anxious.

Causing alarm to the half-dozen ladies of our party.

"That infernal fellow Orlebar has given us the slip," he said. "Perhaps I ought to have been more careful, but as he gets all he wants on the ship I didn't think that he would seize upon the chance of a shore racket. I expect he's soaking himself in some wine-shop by this time."

"I shouldn't trouble about it," I replied. "The man is a free agent, and so long as he doesn't make himself personally offensive to others we can't very well control him."

But, as it turned out, the contingency I mentioned was just what we had to reckon with. Zavertal's party and mine separated again, his to go through the galleries and mount to the flag-staff, while we preferred to loiter away the day in the Spanish shops and among the quaint byways of the old town. We lunched at the hotel, and later on we were sitting in the public gardens, having what Waldo called "a high old time," when that worthy veteran, who was next me, touched my arm and whispered:

"Here comes the black sheep. Look out for squalls, Captain; he appears to be on a thundering out-West tear."

Following the direction of his eyes, I saw Orlebar coming towards us, and his demeanour certainly warranted the General's warning. His bloodshot eyes glared with drunken ferocity, and his wild gesticulations, as he made straight for us, were already causing alarm to the half-dozen ladies of our party. Mrs. Brinkworth especially, who was sitting on the other side of the General, turned as white as a sheet, and I remembered the recognition of her by Orlebar which I had noticed on the first day out.

It was quickly shown that Aline's companion was indeed the cause and object of the dipsomaniac's singular demonstration. Rushing up to her, he commenced a flood of incoherent abuse from which, before Waldo and I laid hands on him, it was only possible to gather that he meant to imply that she was his divorced wife. Realising that the wretched creature was not master of his actions we handled him gently, and taking an arm each led him to the garden gates. There I gave him to understand that he would be handed over to the police if he returned to annoy the ladies further, adding that his baggage and his man-servant would be sent ashore the moment I got back to the ship, as it was impossible that I could risk a repetition of his outrageous conduct by permitting him to continue the voyage. I was worked up into a fine white heat, and did not stop to consider whether the owners would approve a course which would entail their refunding the price of his ticket.

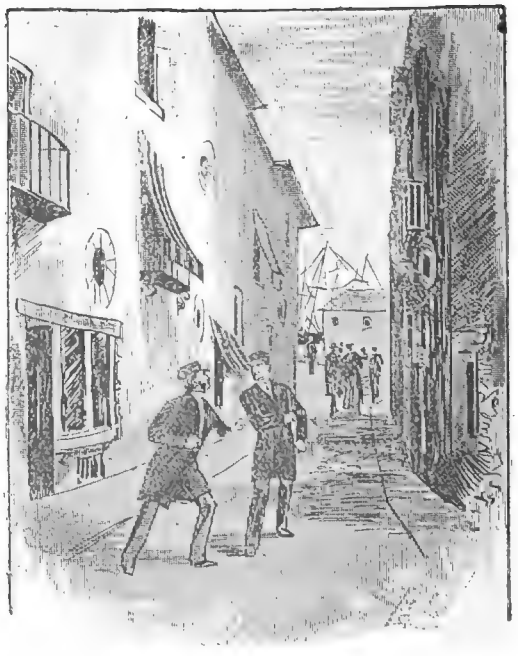
Orlebar went cursing away towards the town, and Waldo and I walked back to the others. We had collared the drunken man so promptly that we had had no time to note how the victim of his diatribes received them, and it was reassuring to find that, though still very pale, Mrs. Brinkworth was quite composed. Aline with generous vigour had taken up the cudgels on her companion's behalf, and was explaining to the other ladies that far from Orlebar having divorced his wife she had in truth divorced him for gross cruelty and misconduct.

"Ella has shown me copies of the *Times* containing the report of the trial," the fair young champion was saying, as we resumed our seats. "She has nothing to be ashamed of or to conceal."

"Perhaps it would have been better if I had let it be known that my late husband was on board," said the injured woman sadly, "but I was aware that he had married again, and I thought that he would have been the first to want to keep our former relations secret."

"And so he would, I guess, if he could have controlled himself," said Waldo. "It is the condition he is in that we have to thank for to-day's outbreak. I can't think what our usually astute doctor is up to—leaving him on the rampage about the town."

The ladies of the party, as indeed, all throughout the ship, were already prejudiced against Orlebar, and Aline's advocacy effectually nipped in the bud any tendency they might have had to look askance at Ella Brinkworth



"Just a word with you, Captain."

because of the unpleasant occurrence. In fact, they treated her with the greatest sympathy, and when the poor thing began to explain that the name she was known by was

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really her maiden name, they begged her not to distress herself by referring further to the matter.

We had arranged to return to the ship for dinner, and the scene in the public gardens having rather damped our ardour, I do not think that anyone was sorry when it was

Felt his patient's pulse.

time to go down to the boats. In taking a short cut to the landing-place I piloted the party through one of the narrow streets in the lower town, where every other house was a sailors' drinking den, either under the pretentious title of wine shop, or as an avowed cabaret, and we had nearly reached the end of the not very reputable thoroughfare, when a man hurrying out of an open doorway almost ran against me. His apologies were cut short at the very commencement by mutual recognition. It was Doctor Zavertal, and I had a pretty good inkling of what he was up to.

"Pray don't think that I am on the spree, ladies," he laughed in response to the looks of astonishment cast at him. "I must hope to be able to clear myself later, but—just a word with you, Captain," and he drew me aside, while the others, in obedience to my gesture, went slowly on towards the landing-place.

"You are looking for Orlebar?" I said.

"Yes," he replied. "I fully expected to find him at Saccone's, but he must have got among the less respectable boozing-kens. I am sure to unearth him somewhere hereaway, though."

"I shouldn't waste time on him," I replied, and then I briefly recounted what had happened, concluding with my determination to send Orlebar's luggage ashore, together with his valet, and to leave the lot behind. Zavertal listened with every appearance of genuine annoyance to the story of the wretched man's behaviour, but the moment I mentioned the course I was going to take I felt that he disapproved of it, though his face expressed nothing more than respectful concern.

"You have quite made up your mind that this will be best, Captain Forrester?" he said, and I fancied that his eyes hardened as he spoke.

"Certainly," I replied. "We can't have a drunken blackguard on board insulting people with reckless lies. What other 'best,' as you call it, can there be?"

He looked at me thoughtfully before answering, not as if in any doubt as to his purpose, but rather with a cold, measuring glance that strove to fathom the lengths to which he could safely go with me. So at least it seemed to me, and the prying scrutiny galled me into impatience.

"Come," I said, looking significantly up the street to the corner round which Aline and the rest had now disappeared, "have you any objection, Doctor Zavertal?"

He came a step nearer, and spoke so straight, that once again a budding suspicion, ridiculous in its vagueness and born of what then looked like merest trifles, faded into the background.

"As you ask me the direct question, sir," he said, "it is my duty to say that I have the very gravest objection to leaving Mr. Orlebar behind. He has been entrusted to me by—his relatives, as a patient in serious danger of his life. How can I reconcile myself to leaving him stranded here, where he will probably do himself to death in a week? What shall I say to his people on my return, and what of my professional reputation? I do not see how you can expect me to endorse your decision, and I trust sincerely that you will reconsider it. And surely, sir, the credit of the ship as a safe resort for invalids should weigh with you."

From his point of view I quite saw the force of his argument. His appeal, too, was couched so strongly and yet so modestly that almost before I knew it I was debating whether I could yield to his wishes without loss of dignity. I remembered Nathan's instruction to defer to him in all matters affecting the passengers, and I was the more ready to do so as he had made no attempt to avail himself of an authority which he doubtless knew he possessed.

Moreover, if I held out, and he cabled home to the owners for confirmation of his wishes, I should look a good deal more foolish than if I gave in now, in the very probable event of their backing him up. As it was, no one besides Waldo and Orlebar himself knew of what I had intended.

"We appear to be both working to the same end, Doctor—the welfare of the passengers," I said. "Supposing that I cancel the arrangement to oblige you, can you give me any sort of assurance that the man shall not repeat his conduct?"

"You shall have my personal guarantee that nothing of the sort shall happen again," was the reply. "I cannot engage to cure the fellow, either of his disease or of his propensities, but you shall have my entire co-operation in putting any restraint upon him that may be necessary. I don't care so long as I have him on the ship for treatment, and, between you and me, sir, I think that death will relieve us of his presence before long."

"So let it be, then," I said, and leaving him to continue the search, I hurried down to the boat to find the others embarked, and waiting for me in some curiosity as to the cause of my delay. I said nothing, however, during the pull out to the boat, out of consideration for Mrs. Brinkworth, but confided the change of plan to Waldo as soon as we were on board and the ladies had gone to their cabins. To my satisfaction, he abstained from chaffing me on my being over-ruled by the Doctor, and he even assented that "second thoughts were often best."

Orlebar was brought on board by Zavertal while dinner was on in the saloon, and being taken straight to his state-room to bed, he gave rise to no further uneasiness that night. We weighed anchor the next morning at ten o'clock, and shortly afterwards he appeared on deck, to the surprise of everybody, seeming better rather than worse for the escapade of the previous day. He had his lounge placed in its usual position under the lee of the smoking-room, but, instead of perpetually sending to the bar for "pegs," according to his habit, he amused himself quietly with a novel. Aline and Mrs. Brinkworth naturally gave him a wide berth, but he evinced no sign of noticing his former wife's presence on deck.

There was a good deal of shipping about in the Straits, and, in consequence, for several hours after leaving the Rock, I remained upon the bridge, whence I had a clear

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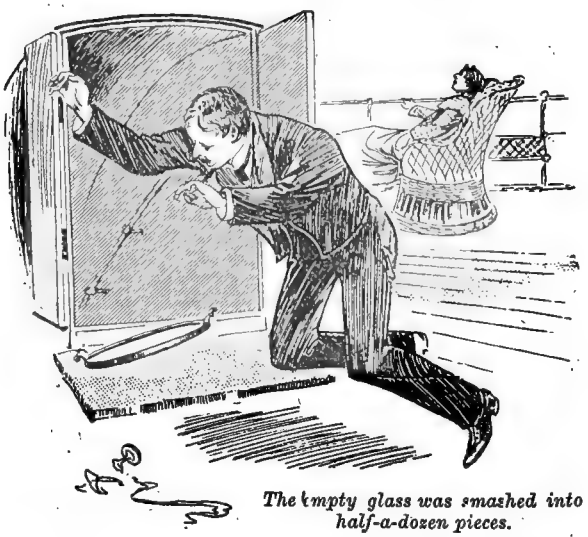
view of all that went on below. Eight bells had just announced noon, when I saw Aline and Mrs. Brinkworth gather up their books and work and go down the saloon



The empty glass was smashed into half-a-dozen pieces.

stairs. A few moments later Doctor Zavertal, who had been paying great attention to Orlebar all the morning, came out of the surgery, and, going aft, felt his patient's pulse, carefully timing the result with his chronometer. He came away immediately, his face very grave, and then he, too, disappeared down the saloon stairs, after stopping on the way to answer some remark which General Waldo, whom he met, made in passing. After parting from the Doctor, Waldo went on and chatted for a moment or two with Orlebar—somewhat to my surprise, considering the man's conduct on the day previous—and then he joined a group of passengers further aft.

At the end of five minutes Enriquez, the stowaway, now serving as an assistant steward, came on deck with a tray on which was a glass of dark liquid that looked like port wine. He took it to Orlebar, who drank it at a gulp and replaced the glass on the tray. Enriquez then started to return below, but as he was nearing the companion-way he tripped and fell, dropping the tray on to the deck with such violence that the empty glass was smashed into half-a-dozen pieces. Regaining his feet in an instant, he collected the bits of broken glass and tossed them overboard, after which he proceeded on his way and disappeared down the stairs.

During the next few minutes I was occupied with the navigation of the vessel, and paid no attention to what was happening on deck. When I again turned my eyes that way I saw that there was a commotion in the neighbourhood of Orlebar's lounge. Zavertal was pushing his way through a number of male passengers who had gathered round it, while the ladies were all looking that way with frightened faces.

A minute later a messenger came to me from the Doctor to say that Mr. Orlebar was dead.

CHAPTER IX.

A Mysterious Communication.

The stir caused by Desmond Orlebar's death soon quieted down, hardly lasting, in fact, longer than the end of luncheon, which was luckily announced shortly after the occurrence. Zavertal saw to all the necessary arrangements for the funeral, which he advised, for excellent reasons, should take place the same afternoon, and as he professed himself able to certify the death as due to natural causes, it was not for me to put obstacles in the way. I myself conducted the short ceremony with which the body was committed to the sea from the fo'c'sle—well away from the passengers, very few of whom knew what was going on forward.

Orlebar's habits had made him so unpopular on board that the only sentiments which I heard expressed about his decease were of the "serve-him-right" order. All the sympathy evoked was reserved for the unfortunate woman who, by a strange coincidence, had found herself brought face to face with the miserable creature whom she might reasonably have expected to have gone out of her life for ever. Mrs. Brinkworth kept to her state-room for the rest of the day, but Aline, who was constant in her kindness, told me that she did not pretend to feel regret for a man who had ceased to be anything to her but a shameful memory.

A musical entertainment had been arranged for in the saloon that evening, and, true to the policy which our philosophic bo'sun had suggested, the event of the morning was regarded by Zavertal as a reason for holding rather than postponing it. Finding that he was backed in his opinion by a great majority of passengers, I offered no objection, though to me, who had never sailed in a pleasure cruiser before, it seemed a little callous. However, as the affair was to come off, I thought it would be foolish to excite controversy by absenting myself, and I confess that, apart from the absence of Aline, who was sitting with Mrs. Brinkworth in her cabin, I passed a very festive evening.

After the improvised curtain had fallen on the last "turn," I spent an hour or two on the bridge. When at length I went to my room to turn in, the passengers had all retired for the night, and, save for the throbbing of the engines, the ship was as quiet as a church. The electric arc in my cabin had been switched off as usual the last thing by my steward, and such light as there was came from an oil lamp

There was a commotion in the neighbourhood of Olebar's Lounge.

which I kept burning all night in case I was suddenly called.

My table stood almost beyond the reach of the lamp's feeble rays, and therefore it was not till I prepared to undress that I noticed a sealed letter lying on the top of my blotting pad. The envelope itself was enough to pique curiosity, being addressed to me in large printed capitals that suggested a desire for disguise. Tearing it open this

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is what I read, written in the same obviously unnatural hand:

To Captain Forrester.

Dear Sir,—

I am not one who believes in anonymous letters except in exceptional circumstances. It is because I believe that the circumstances in which I write are *very* exceptional that I adopt a mode of communication that I ordinarily despise. I the more readily do so since in a few days I may have the pleasure of confiding in you personally.

At present my object is to warn you against the man Enriquez who was found hidden on board on the third day of the voyage. I can give no reasons for my warning as yet, but in all sincerity I say that in my belief you will have serious cause for regret if you disregard it. If a certain theory which has been forced upon me turns out to be correct, this man's presence on board may mean the difference between life and death to some of those entrusted to your charge.

The envelope itself was enough to pique curiosity.

The next port of call in the programme of the trip is Genoa; I would suggest that *en route* you should suddenly make some excuse for running into Barcelona, and there put Enriquez ashore without first giving him any hint of your intention. In order to secure the full advantage of my proposal it is also imperative that you preserve absolute silence with regard to this letter and its subject, trusting in no one, however worthy to be consulted on such a matter anyone may appear. One of my reasons for not speaking to you in person about it is the necessity—the vital necessity—of my interference being kept secret from certain persons on the ship, and that end would be defeated if we were seen putting our heads together. There are sharp eyes and ears on the *Queen of Night*.

In conclusion, you will see that if I am wrong in my theory—hunting a mare's nest, in fact—no harm will have been done by landing a stowaway in the country to which he professed to be anxious to go. If his account of himself is true he will be the first to thank you. On the other hand, if my conjectures are correct, you will have at least thrown obstacles in the way of cruel and designing men.

There was a nice production for a tired ship captain to receive at the close of a rather worrying day. It ended abruptly, without signature of any kind, the usual vulgar *noms de guerre* of anonymous letter writers, such as "A Friend" or "A Well-wisher," being despised by my correspondent. This fact, in conjunction with the earnest tone of the language, which was at least that of a person of education, weighed with me in his favour, and made me disposed to credit the writer with genuine motives. At any rate, the letter did not emanate from a jealous or quarrelsome fellow-servant of the man attacked.

We should not be off Barcelona till late on the following night, so I decided to sleep on the matter before coming to a conclusion how to act. Our course, which in any case lay close to the northern Spanish port, would not have to be altered till the last moment in the event of my wishing to run in, and there would therefore be no need for anyone to know that we were going to touch there till after everyone but the watch on deck had retired to rest. As to the letter itself, I recognised from the first that it would be useless to puzzle over its origin. It was too carefully disguised to admit of the handwriting being traced, and it was not likely that the person who placed it on my table would have entered my room while anyone was looking. All I had to do was to decide whether or no to heed the warning.

In the morning, as often happens when one goes to bed with some knotty question in doubt, I awoke with a settled mind. I would adopt the mysterious writer's suggestion, and land Enriquez at Barcelona, and the argument that prevailed was the principal, nay, the only, one in the letter—that if there was nothing about the man he would be the last to complain. Anyhow, it would be better than running risks, and as we were not steaming "on time," the delay of an hour or so would harm no one.

All that day we steered north-eastwards under the coast of Spain, running in near enough to give the passengers a view of the ruined Moorish castles and nestling villages among the vine-clad slopes. Fine weather still prevailed, and Aline and her companion emerged from their brief retirement, Mrs. Brinkworth being evidently grateful for the universal kindness that ignored her connection with Orlebar.

In looking over my private log of the voyage I find that two items pertinent to the story are entered under that day's date, though at the time they seemed of such slight importance that it is only by chance that I recorded them. One was that General Waldo was confined to his state room with an attack of gout, and would see no one but his bedroom steward, not even the Doctor, who, of course, proffered his services.

The other item was that the young Earl of Darranmore, while skylarking as usual on deck after breakfast, had another fainting fit very like the first, except that it lasted longer and left him much more prostrate. Zavertal was most assiduous in his attentions to the lad, and brought him round in time to take his place at the dinner-table.

At eleven o'clock that night, when the ladies had all gone to their cabins and only a few men lingered in the smoking-room, I calculated that we were about twenty miles south of Barcelona, steering so as to pass that port at a distance of three miles. In order to run for the harbour the course would have to be altered in half an hour, and I went up on to the bridge to be ready for the emergency. It was Mr. McIntyre, the chief officer's, watch, and I felt pretty sure that that imperturbable Scotsman would execute any orders I might give him without troubling himself about reasons.

It was as I expected. After a turn or two on the bridge I said quite quietly, and with the air of having forgotten something that didn't much matter:

"By the way, Mr. McIntyre, keep her off a point or two nor'-west, please, and bear up for Barcelona harbour. I want to send a boat ashore with a telegram."

"Aye, aye, sir," was the unconcerned reply, and he gave the requisite order to the man at the wheel without comment. To keep his mind from dwelling too much on the sudden order I broached the subject of some painting that had to be done before reaching Nice, and, conversation on the bridge of a large steamer approaching a crowded port being necessarily disjointed, the topic lasted us till the ship was in the bay and within half a mile of the town.

Not wishing to disturb the passengers and waste time by dropping anchor, I gave orders to lay to, and have a boat manned, intimating that I would go in her myself. Not till she was reported ready did I descend from the bridge, and it was only at the last moment, as I reached the head of the ladder, that I paused, as though struck with an afterthought, and told the man who was minding the side to go and turn out Enriquez, the stowaway.

"I'll take him along as an interpreter," I said.

Waiting at the ladder-head, I was glad to see that the unexpected stoppage of the engines had caused no alarm. The ship from stem to stern was wrapped in the stillness of night, and except for a few figures—those of the watch—dimly seen forward, the long expanse of deck was deserted. In my own room, the lamp was burning, but the windows of all the other deck-houses were dark, including that of Zavertal, who was sometimes a late sitter.

In less than two minutes I saw my messenger returning alone. "The Spaniard is not in his bunk, sir, or anywhere else in the steward's quarters," he said. "The others know

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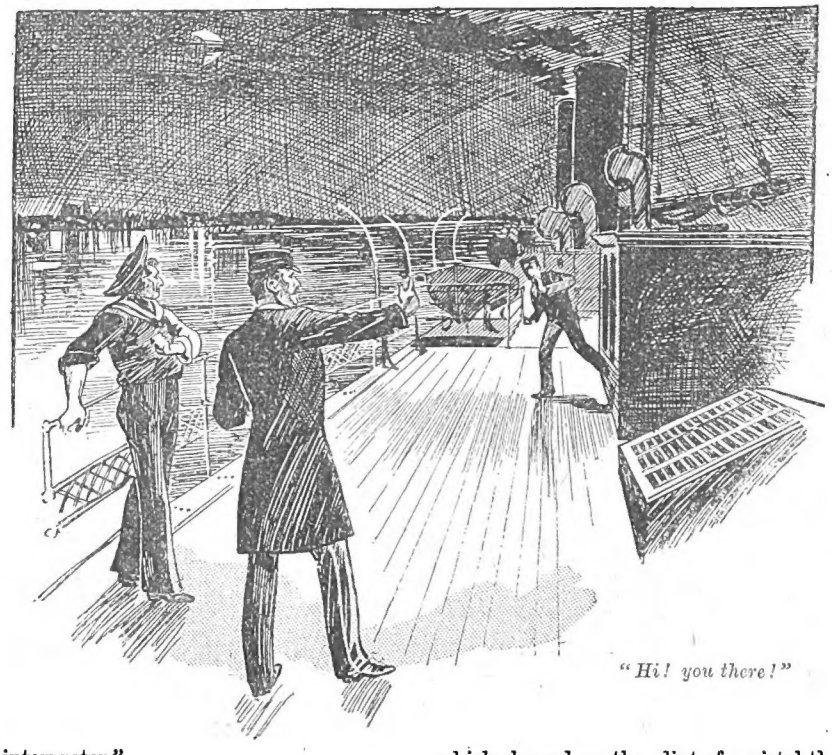
nothing of him, except that he turned in at the usual time, and ought to be in bed."

Under the circumstances this was not only startling, but embarrassing, for I had run into Barcelona for no other reason than to put the stowaway ashore, and there was the boat ready and waiting below. In addition, the fellow's absence from his bed in the middle of the night seemed to lend colour to the vague imputation that he was up to no good on board. I was rapidly debating what was best to be done, when my messenger exclaimed:

"Beg pardon, sir, but there is the man, sir, coming out of the surgery."



"Hi! you there!"

It was true enough. Enriquez was leaving Zavertal's cabin. On seeing us he made a motion as though to slink back again, but, changing his mind, he came boldly along the deck, I suppose, on his way back to his bunk.

"Hi! you there! What are you doing on deck at this time of night?" I asked.

He stopped with a cringing bow, and began to rub his stomach. "Seeck—me very seeck, Señor Capitan. Go Doctor," he whined.

"Very well," I said, "we'll see whether your native air won't cure you. Get down into that boat. I want an interpreter."

I forgot for a moment his limited stock of English, but the gesture with which I accompanied the command made it sufficiently clear, and he evidently understood. Yet there was a certain hesitation in his manner of obeying. He went slowly to the ship's side, casting furtive glances along the deck, and once half turning as if to expostulate or refuse. However, I kept close behind him, letting him see that he had got to go, and he went. Following him down the ladder, I took the tiller, and the boat was soon speeding across the smooth water of the harbour.

I had prepared an envelope containing a blank sheet of paper, and as soon as we reached the landing steps, I gave it and an English sovereign to Enriquez, who had sat silently scowling in the bows. My idea was that if I was doing the man an injustice the money would be useful in taking him to his own place, while in the meanwhile it would help to sustain the fiction I meant to employ.

"Go telegraph office. Send quickly. Then come back here," I said, choosing words that would be most readily intelligible to a foreigner. If he had suspicions on the ship I think my manner must have allayed them now, for he put out his hand for the envelope and the sovereign, and went up the steps on to the quay. The moment he had disappeared I gave the word to row back to the steamer.

"It's all right, my lads," I said, in answer to the honest wonder expressed on the faces of the men as they bent their backs to the oars. "The stowaway is going to get left, that's all. We don't want that kind of cattle on the ship."

"He don't take kindly to it, Captain," replied one of the men. "Whew! look out. He's going to shoot."

We were half-a-dozen boat's lengths from the quay, and, glancing back, I saw the dark form of Enriquez outlined at the top of the landing step. There was a flickering gas-lamp behind him which showed us the glint of a pistol that he held levelled at the boat. Even as we looked, every second expecting the crash of a bullet in our midst, he thought better of it and lowered the weapon, to hurl after me instead a cry of angry menace:

"Next time, Forrester, next time," he shouted. "This is the worst night's work *you* ever did for yourself."

All around was calm and still, and his words rang sharp across the water. They were spoken in excellent English, and in a voice I could have sworn I had heard before—where? I racked my brains all the way back to the steamer to remember.

(To be continued.)

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CORPULENCE

INCREASING POPULARITY OF AN EFFECTUAL CURE.

Many of our readers are, doubtless, familiar with the nature of the extraordinary revolution in the cure of obesity which, within recent years, has been wrought by the original researches of that now eminent expert, Mr. F. Cecil Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It is evident that the certainty, the rapidity, and the agreeable surroundings of his curative process have been recognised, in a very large degree, among ladies and gentlemen belonging to the highest social circles. Keen observers who have an opportunity of judging inform us, through the pages of society papers and otherwise, that owing to the general employment of Mr. Russell's treatment extreme obesity is becoming as much a thing of the past, at fashionable gatherings, as intoxication; and, no doubt, it will soon be regarded as nearly as disgraceful. The issue of an eighteenth edition of the author's singularly convincing little text-book, "Corpulency, and the Cure," however, serves to remind us that the popularity of the system has now reached spheres far remote from those of West-end fashion. The book of 256 pages may be had (post-free) by sending six penny stamps to Mr. Russell's offices, as above; and it is worth the careful attention of those who wish to free themselves of a burden of fat—not merely because it is unseemly and adds enormously to the apparent age of the sufferer—but because extreme obesity terribly interferes with the energy necessary in these days of competion to make one's way in the world, or even to earn a very modest competency. A large proportion of the letters of Mr. Russell's grateful correspondents refer to their delight at being enabled—within a very brief period, and without any irksome conditions implying semi-starvation—to attack their accustomed tasks with pleasure instead of wearied disgust, through being reduced to their normal weight. The popularity of the system is also largely due, doubtless, to the English hatred of mystery, which is utterly swept aside by Mr. Russell. He fully explains his modus operandi, and supplies the receipt for his preparation.

"DELIGHTFUL" TREATMENT

FOR CURING

CORPULENCE.

The process of curing any physical disorder is so generally the converse of "delightful" that the use of this and similar terms in reference to Mr. F. C. Russell's now popular treatment for corpulency naturally attracts special attention. These terms are to be found in a large number of the letters included in the just issued 18th edition of Mr. Russell's little volume of 256 pages. "Corpulency, and the Cure" (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.). These communications are from persons of both sexes, and it is apparent that their number is represented by thousands annually, who have found in this system of treatment a safe, rapid, and permanent cure for excessive fatness. This testimony forms in the aggregate, indeed, a wonderful record of the rapid reduction of excessive adipose tissue, and those who have personal reasons for being interested in the subject should send to the above address six penny stamps for a copy (post free) of Mr. Russell's notably suggestive little book. "I think the treatment most delightful," writes one out of a large number of equally enthusiastic correspondents. And the expressions "Admirable tonic," "Splendid stuff," "A delicious beverage, mixed with mineral waters," are of constant recurrence in this singularly interesting correspondence. The details given by many of the writers of these letters as to the results of the treatment fully justify the use of such eulogistic phrases. It must certainly be delightful to experience the sensation of losing unnecessary and dangerous fat by pounds per week, and frequently stones per month, and that by the aid of treatment which simultaneously increases the appetite and renders its reasonable indulgence innocuous. The experience, too, must be rendered still more delightful by the knowledge, which may be gained from a perusal of Mr. Russell's book, that his preparation is a pure vegetable product, without any admixture of the mineral poisons which are too frequently administered. With a candour which also is delightful, Mr. Russell prints in his book the recipe for the preparation.

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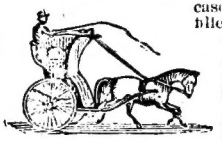

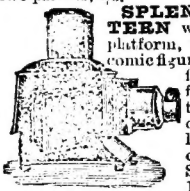

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